

Journey

The Christian News Magazine of the
Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

FIDEL CASTRO and RELIGION

**REPORT ON THE NCCC/UFMCC
CONSULTATION**

...Homosexuality and Scripture

RESPONSE TO THE AIDS CRISIS

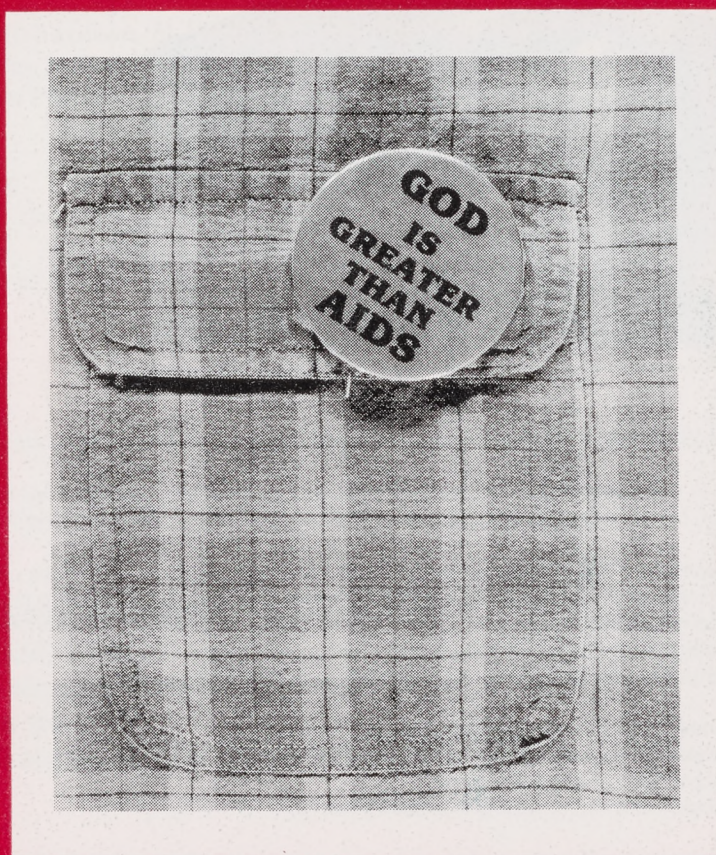
...Some Varied Perspectives

**Nancy Manahan, Co-Author of
LESBIAN NUNS BREAKING SILENCE**

tells

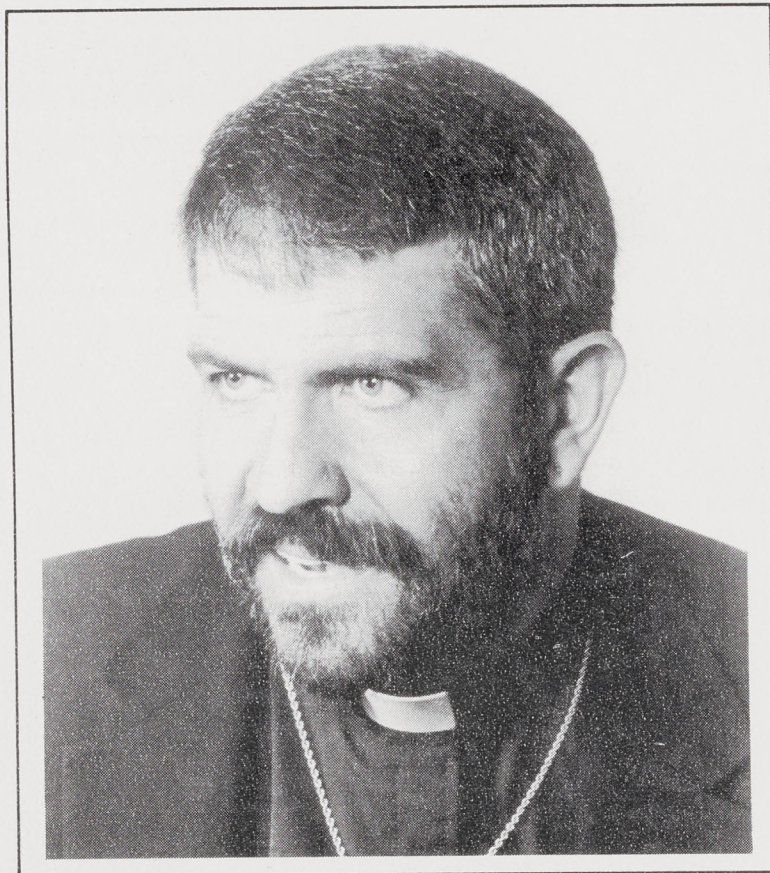
HOW THE SILENCE WAS BROKEN

PENTECOST 1986



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A Message from the Reverend Elder Troy D. Perry



It is certainly appropriate when we talk about AIDS to talk about death and dying but I believe that we are called to talk about eternal life too.

We have a bad habit sometimes in our community that when someone is diagnosed with AIDS we think it is automatically a death sentence. I don't believe that for a minute. If that is automatically it, then the blood of Jesus Christ is to no avail.

It is horrible that some persons take this sickness issue and use it as a political issue. Some would have us believe that God gave us this disease and it is a sin to do research or make efforts to cure it. Don't you believe that. Jesus died not only for our sins but "by his stripes we are healed!"

We in UFMCC must never forget what our calling is. We must never forget who we are. We are not just some gay and lesbian organization, we're the church of the living God—the ground, the pillar and the truth.

I have to give my brothers and my sisters hope;
hope that something can happen,
hope that a change can come,
hope that there is healing in Jesus Christ.

You can live about forty days without food.
You can live about three days without water.
You can live about three minutes without air.
But you can't (really) live one second
without some hope somewhere.
OUR HOPE IS IN JESUS CHRIST!
Knowing that makes the difference for us.

God has called us. We have to be at the forefront. We must learn everything that we can about this disease; to look it square in the face without fear and know that Jesus is bigger than any of our infirmities.

JOURNEY

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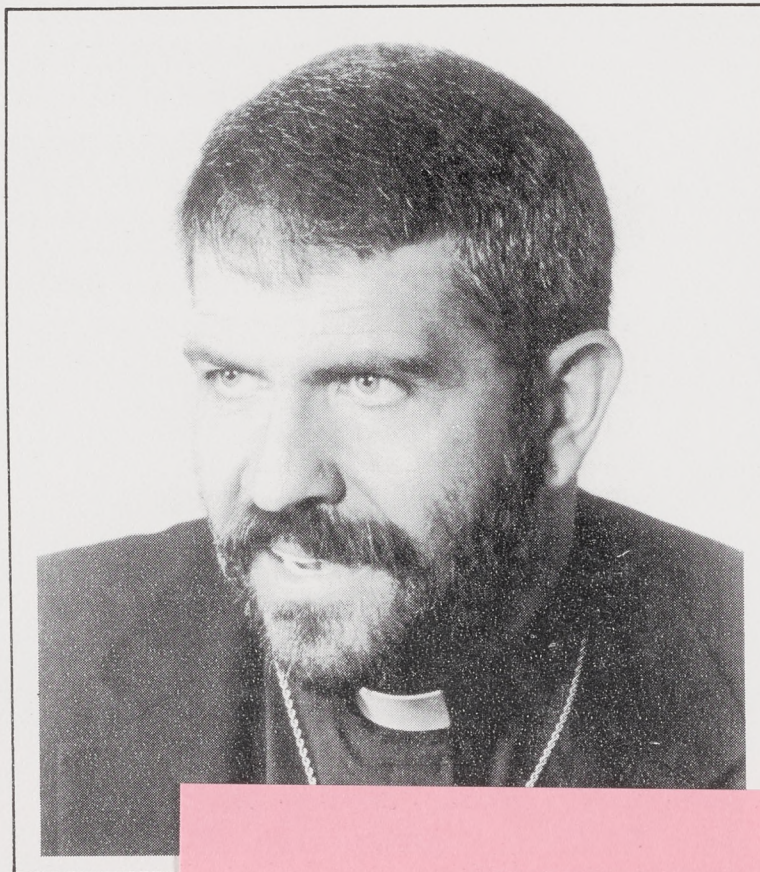
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It is horrible that some persons talk that God gave us this disease and it died not only for our sins but "by his blood."

We in UFMCC must never forget that we are a gay and lesbian organization, we're the only one.

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JOURNEY is a quarterly magazine of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC). The UFMCC is an international denomination of Christian churches with a special outreach to the Lesbian and Gay community.

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IN THIS ISSUE....

The focus of this issue is AIDS, the disease challenging our society in many ways. The media coverage has been such that we would not presume to be "covering the story" here. Most of us have read a great deal about the impact of the disease. It is also true that being confronted with the present crisis has brought a new opportunity for dignity, spiritual depth, awareness and sensitivity to our communities. We hope to have covered here a part of the story of how the society religious has been responding to AIDS. Beyond that we hope we are able to convey a feeling for the stimulus for spiritual growth that comes with the crisis. GOD IS GREATER THAN AIDS!

THE EDITOR

HOME and AIDS

Written for JOURNEY by Chris Glaser

*"Come home, ye who are weary, come home!
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling, calling,
O Sinner, come home!"*

A friend who served as a camp counselor told a story of a teenager who fell from the watertower at camp.

The counselors gathered around a phone in the office, waiting to hear word of the youth's condition from the distant hospital. They already knew the only two possibilities: the boy would be paralyzed from the neck down, or he would die.

Grieved, despairing, one woman poignantly sighed, "This is one of those times you wish Mommy could kiss it and make it all better."

Jesus told the story of a teenager who opted for an early inheritance plan and spent half the family resources frivolously. Grieved, despairing, the father waited for his return and recognized his son when he was yet far down the road. Joyously the father restored the son to the family, surrounding him with the love and riches of home.

Hymn writer Will Thompson cast Jesus as this forgiving parent: *"Patient and loving, he's waiting and watching, watching for you and for me. Come home..."*

Last night I had a nightmare: I dreamed I had AIDS. Grieved, despairing, I wished it were not so. I wanted to be comforted, for someone to make it all better. I wanted to find home. I woke and realized I was home, home with my lover. I did not have AIDS.

Others have experienced similar nightmares about contracting AIDS. And some have been unable to wake from their nightmare because they have been diagnosed with AIDS.

Both groups need the healing resources of HOME. Both need Mommy to kiss it and make it better. Both need a non-judgmental father who eagerly awaits to welcome them home.

God's providence has given me a supportive and loving mother and father to whom I may yet go in the crises of my life. And though I no longer expect them to take care of me, I yet may anticipate that they care for me and for the one with whom I share my life. Most stress tests give favorable points for having loving family

nearby.

Yet many who are lesbian and gay do not have access to mothers and fathers. Perhaps rejection alienates them. Perhaps a move to more accepting urban areas geographically separates them. Maybe a closet door still disabled the intimacy required for any true support.

Maybe one or both parents are dead. Or perhaps relations with parents never developed to a place where "home" as I've described it was anything more than an ideal concept.

Jesus lifted the family of faith over the biological family.

"Who are my mother and brothers and sisters?" Jesus asked rhetorically, "Those who do the will of my Father in heaven."

The family of faith is Jesus' family. In his crisis, the cross, Jesus introduces his mother Mary and the disciple John as mother and son. They would need one another to be cared by and to care for. In facing the crisis of the crucifixion, they needed the spiritual home Jesus created from the cross.

But Jesus didn't create a spiritual home for just Mary and John. He created a home for us as well, for in his life and death he was bringing us home to God and to one another as his sisters and brothers.

For those without family and for those with family, the church may become our spiritual home, a place where "they have to take you in." Unhappily, the broader church has played the resentful, elder brother, jealous of Jesus' eagerness to welcome gays and lesbians in this spiritual home.

The broader church has refused to come in to the "welcome home" feast, failing to understand why we had to leave home to find out who we are. The broader church rejects our hope of coming home again to the spiritual family, the family of faith.

Though religious bigots perceive it otherwise, AIDS is not a punishment for being gay. Rather, AIDS is a challenge to the church's homophobia. God is testing the church to see if it will be faithful to

Christ's Spirit in meaningful ministry to the "leper" of the twentieth century.

Though cautious in generalizing from my experience, I've witnessed that those who have access to genuinely supportive family/community seem to enjoy a greater resistance to AIDS. The church could be a source of healing if, like Christ, it announced, "Ye who are weary, come home!"

There are an increasing number of "healing services" for persons with AIDS. I'm glad for that, as long as we don't mislead people as to what healing means within our tradition.

Healing is a restoration to God's community of faith, the removal of any obstacle to that restoration. That healing may express itself in remission for persons with AIDS, but it may also simply mean that persons with AIDS will be able to die "at home": at home with God, at home with their family of faith.

Finally, we must remember that every service of worship is to be a healing event, bringing us home to God and to one another.

As Metropolitan Community Churches have been the spiritual haven for the broader church in reference to lesbian and gay issues, once again MCC's have been called to serve as haven for the broader church in relation to persons who fear or face AIDS.

MCC joins hands with lesbian/gay support groups in other denominations and traditions in modeling ministries of compassion with persons with AIDS, their lovers and families, and the "worried well."

But we do not offer a "bandaid" ministry; together we continue to address the root of our vulnerability to devastating illness, whether that illness be homophobia or AIDS: the church's resistance to sharing the common wealth of faith.

Let us pray the elder brother, the broader church, may also heed Jesus: *"O for the wonderful love he has promised, Promised for you and for me...Come home, come home! Ye who are weary, come home! Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling, Calling 'O sinner, come home!'"*

In recent years the endless stream of disaffected American youth, including rock stars and other momentary celebrities, wending its way to India in search of truth-with-a-capital-T has popularized some of the ancient Eastern spiritual paths.

From time to time some social commentator will suggest that the infinite human suffering present on the Asian subcontinent makes India a special place for spiritual pursuits.

Now, author Dominique Lapierre, in his most recent book, *The City of Joy*, has undertaken a serious and moving examination of the power of the human spirit in the stinking urban slums of modern Calcutta.

Lapierre, who co-authored *Is Paris Burning*, chose to begin his work by focusing on the Calcutta slums in which the venerated Mother Teresa began her remarkable work of tending and comforting the wretches who faced death alone and destitute in the alleys and gutters of the teeming streets. Lapierre chronicles the adventures of several Western observers as they try to ameliorate the vast suffering in the poorer quarters of Calcutta.

The author tells of Stephan Kovalski, a Polish Catholic priest, who felt called by God to the slum quarter of Calcutta known, ironically, as The City of Joy.

Kovalski rejects the "suggestion" of his church superior that a priest who actually lived among the poor would not be respected and goes to live in a hovel in a flood plain of the city. The illegal shanties are rented to the poor by a criminal syndicate that ruthlessly maintains control of life in the crowded slum.

Ultimately, Kovalski comes to feel that the blessings he receives are far greater than those he is able to bestow upon the outcasts among whom he lives.

Time and again, Kovalski (and the reader, through narrator Lapierre) witnesses the indomitable human spirit work its miracles in the midst of unimaginable despair.

Lapierre gleans the same view from his interviews with the legendary Mother Teresa and an American medical student, Max. Each of these people came to the dank urban squalor in response to the call of God in their hearts and each found daily examples of God's presence in those stygian environs.

Lapierre traces the urbanization of the Indian peasant and the social forces that create the hideous morass that is contemporary urban Calcutta. Uprooted from an accustomed life near the land only to stand in the crowded streets of an uncaring city, the peasant finds work when he jumps to assume the heavy burden of a fellow peasant who dies in the street from his exertion.

Lapierre tells of a leper who serves others while bravely facing death himself and of a terminally ill peasant who sells his

A BOOK REVIEW

The City of Joy

Reviewed by Tom Doyal

Publisher of Liberty Books

Austin, Texas

The City of Joy by Dominique Lapierre, (translated from the French by Kathryn Spink) Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1985. 464 pp., \$17.95 in hard cover, available at your local bookseller.

own bones to finance the betterment of his family. The sacrifices by the women in the City of Joy are a litany of selflessness.

Despite the poverty, an indifferent government, corrupt officials, illness, hunger and a thousand daily dangers, the pulse of life continues its miraculous beat and God can be glimpsed in the lives of the inhabitants in the City of Joy.

While providing an incredible look at the

poverty and riches of modern Calcutta, Lapierre lifts each heart with this account of the indefatigable human spirit.

Along the way, he teaches a goodly amount of history, political science--and its chicanery--and other important lessons bearing on issues of peace and justice in the world today. *The City of Joy* is a fine, fine book that merits your attention.

DOMINIQUE LAPIERRE

The co-author of *IS PARIS BURNING?*
tells an epic of love, heroism, and
hope in the India of Mother Teresa.

THE CITY OF JOY

How The Silence Was Broken

Nancy Manahan (The Co-author of **LESBIAN NUNS BREAKING SILENCE**) Speaks Out

Editor's Note: The first seven paragraphs of this article are reprinted from the book "Lesbian Nuns Breaking Silence" by Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahan. The Naiad Press Inc., 1985 pp. xxxv-xxxvii and used by permission of the Naiad Press Inc. (P.O. Box 10543 Tallahassee, Florida 32302). The remainder of the article is transcribed from an interview with Nancy Manahan.

"Breaking silence" has a double meaning. The first is the breaking of the historic silence about erotic love between women in religious life. This is the first book published on the subject. The second meaning is probably familiar only to those who have been in religious life. Before the radical changes in the Catholic Church prompted by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), silence was the rule of convent living, especially during the novitiate years. Nuns could speak only at specified times, usually in groups. We worked, studied, and ate in silence. Speaking at other times was a grave infraction of the rule. I remember confessing to my sisters and superiors at Chapter of Faults, "I broke silence five times." All five were probably with Sister Johanna, my particular friend at the Maryknoll Missionary Sisters' Novitiate near St. Louis.

I entered the convent after two years in college. Maryknoll required only one year of post-high school study or work, but I was not ready to leave the world after my first year. I was troubled by my growing scepticism of Catholic doctrine, including belief in a Christian God. Yet I felt called to a life of service. I had worked at a camp for ghetto children and had marched with Martin Luther King, Jr. in Chicago. I felt appalled by my middle class rural Minnesota family's big Buick, Fostoria crystal, and baby grand piano when so many were starving. My boyfriends struck a response in me like the flame of one paper match. Yet none of the leaping fires of my high school and college girlfriend crushes had developed into satisfying relationships; we were all trying to be heterosexual. I made the rational decision: I could give myself completely to a life of service by joining a missionary order. I hoped either that my atheism wouldn't matter, or that once I devoted myself to studying the great mystics and doctors of the Church, I would see the light.

Silence was the rule of convent living

At the Maryknoll novitiate, I confessed my religious doubts to my postulant mistress, Sister Rita Anne. She suggested I talk to Johanna, an older postulant and an articulate convert to Catholicism. Johanna and I debated the creation story, original sin, indulgences, and papal infallibility. Perhaps I never saw the light because I

didn't want our meetings to end. I didn't know I was in love with her. I only knew that the chapel vibrated when she walked in, and my stomach lurched when she knelt soundlessly behind me. I longed for her touch.

An assistant infirmarian, Johanna visited me when I was hospitalized with spastic colon and ulcer symptoms. In my misery, I held to the end of her long grey scapular for comfort. I knew that what I felt for her was wrong. Home from the hospital, I remember lying on my stomach after the Profound Silence bell, my pajama tops

silently. I didn't want to leave. I loved singing "Salve" with a hundred women, praising a woman, celebrating the cosmos, as light streamed through the chapel windows. I loved cutting apples in the big kitchen while Sister Belinda next to me rolled out pie crust. I especially loved having time to meditate every morning, to read each afternoon, and to study in the evening.

But that night I knew I had to leave. Despite my efforts to believe in the Church, some stubborn part of me refused to swallow. Unless I believed I would always be an outsider, a pretender. My body was



Photograph by Barbara Hammer

Nancy Manahan and Rosemary Curb

unbuttoned down the back, waiting for her. She came in silence, warmed the cream in her hands, and touched me. I hardly breathed through the whole backrub.

Several weeks into my second year at Maryknoll, I heard Robert McAfee Brown speak. I was in a room full of people working for social justice, and most of them weren't nuns. That night I realized that I didn't have to be in the convent to do good. During the fifty-minute drive back to the novitiate with my sisters, I held Johanna's hand under her scapular and sobbed

telling me in every way it knew how it was not happy in the convent. And Maryknoll itself had not lived up to my ideal of "Sell all you have, give it to the poor, and come, follow me." It did not occur to me that being in love with a woman was contributing to my decision.

My body was telling me in every way it knew how it was not happy in the convent

I left two weeks later. Sister Johanna left six months later. We were lovers for seven years...

It wasn't until about fifteen years after I had left the religious community that I realized that although I had tried to walk away from that experience and from the Church and shut the door behind me and not think about it—it wasn't working. There was still so much feeling there, unresolved issues and wounds that just didn't seem to be healing.

I realized that I needed to go back and take a look at that. It was so scary for me to do that by myself and I felt I could not talk about it with someone who had not been through the same experience. I needed to talk to lesbians who had been in religious life first, as a first step.

The search for those women to talk to was the beginning of the book that became *Lesbian Nuns Breaking Silence*.

In the course of working on it, my co-editor, Rosemary Curb, who is an ex-Domonican nun, and I talked to between three and four hundred lesbian nuns and ex-nuns. The book is not my experience or Rosemary's experience, it is the experience of fifty of those women who wrote their stories or whom we interviewed.

So it is really a compilation of experiences of women from their late twenties to their late sixties; women who were in religious life for a short period of time or as long as fifty years, from black and hispanic women as well as white women.

They come from all parts of the United States and from Canada. There is a variety of attitudes on the subject. Some are practicing Catholics who are very much involved in the Church. Others are involved in organizations like Dignity or Integrity or Metropolitan Community Church.

Most of the women that we talked to have left Catholicism completely and they are either involved in some individual form of spirituality (that's true for me) or have found some other system of thought that fits. Quite a few of the women in the book are involved in some form of feminist spirituality.

I think that of the recurring themes we found in the interviews ignorance would take first place. Ignorance of our sexuality and of the options that were open to us.

It was a matter of women getting the information and then having the courage to first break silence to ourselves about exactly who we are...

There was a tremendous desire to be good, and a tremendous idealism in wanting to do it right and to help and serve other people. We found deep unselfishness. It is a remarkable group of

women that we talked to.

Another thing is honesty, breaking the silence and finally coming to terms with what had happened in their lives.

It was a matter of women getting the information and then having the courage to first break silence to ourselves about exactly who we are and what this all meant and the connection of sexuality and spirituality in a culture that fragments those two.

Then came the matter of being brave enough to break that silence in print or in public and say to the feminist community, "Yes, I was a nun."

Sometimes that is very difficult because there is so much prejudice against nuns and religious people in general in the feminist community.

Of course we also have to deal with the deep, ancient prejudice against lesbians and gay men in the institutionalized religious world.

So the breaking silence and trying to come to terms with all of the contradictory elements of our lives and reaching some kind of integration is the predominant theme of the book.

In our interviews we found deep anger and a sense of betrayal. "We gave our all," is the theme in many of the stories. "We believed it, took it into our soul and into our blood, went all the way with it and made all of the sacrifices and we were betrayed."

We found the attitude that, "It wasn't what they told us, the Church wasn't this institution that would nurture, it was tremendous oppression and suppression of our natural feelings and of our health."

I gave my all for a community and for an institution that I really believed in and it failed me, it made me sick, it asked me to do things that were so unhealthy. It turned out not to be all that spiritual after all.

Many of the women that we talked to became ill during their time in religious life. I believe this was just from trying to do something that was so against the grain and from having healthy and natural feelings repressed. This doesn't just mean sexual feelings, but even a natural feeling such as grief.

There are stories in the book of a parent dying or being extremely ill and the rule of the convent was to keep emotions in control so that the whole grieving process was aborted.

That can make someone extremely ill and feel a little crazy. They were supposed to go on with their teaching duties as usual and inside they were crying.

So we did find anger at that kind of repression and the feeling of betrayal.

There were persons who believed, "I gave my all for a community and for an institution that I really believed in and it failed me, it made me sick, it asked me to do things that were so unhealthy. It turned out to be not all that spiritual after all, in fact, there were a lot of petty and very unchristian things happening."

There also, in addition to that anger, is a theme of gratitude for that which religious life offered to us. There were opportunities for education and for careers that we never would have had otherwise. Many of the women are from working class families and would never have had the possibility to become teachers or professionals of any sort or to travel.

Also there was gratitude for encouraging them to develop spiritually. I say that with caution because it was along such a narrow line of spiritual development which was partly encouragement and partly cutting off any little branches that grew off in the "wrong" direction.

Also there was gratitude just because of many of our communities were so wonderful in so many ways. They were dedicated, idealistic, articulate and intelligent women living together. The bonds were very, very deep and formed a basis for knowing about friendship and dedication, loving other women and working together on common projects that has served us in whatever life we have chosen since we left the convent.

We discovered that a lot of these women are leaders in the feminist or lesbian movement or the peace movement, anti-war movement or battered women or rape crisis movement.

Jean O'Leary, for example, is the past President of the National Gay Task Force, Virginia Apuzzo is past President of the National Gay Task Force and Jeanne Cordova was the Editor of *Lesbian Tide* for ten years and now publishes the *Gay Yellow Pages* in Los Angeles. They all happen to be ex-nuns.

A lot of us were very active in the civil rights movement and anti-war movement during the sixties and seventies. I think a lot of our political activism came out of our fury with the system and realizing that what we had been told was a lie.

We were going out there to change things. We were no longer doing it inside the institution because the institution was just getting in the way of making real, basic social change.

The Church's response to *Lesbian Nuns Breaking Silence* has come from two levels.

If we look at Church hierarchy the impact has been minimal and the reaction has been minimal. There have been some Bishops who have denounced the book publicly in print.

The Bishop of Orlando, which is Rosemary Curb's diocese, condemned the

Continued on Page 21

AIDS and the Religious Right

by Jan Nunley



Jan Nunley is a news reporter for public radio station KERA in Dallas and a member of Mid-Cities MCC in Arlington, TX.

In San Jose, California, the president of the nation's largest Protestant denomination tells the San Francisco Examiner that "AIDS is God indicating his displeasure and his attitude" toward homosexuality.

In Chicago, a Methodist minister declares that "AIDS is the plague that homosexuals brought on themselves by going against the Bible's teachings".

In Washington, D.C., White House aide Patrick Buchanan talks about the "poor homosexuals who have declared war on nature and now nature is extracting an awful retribution".

It's certainly not the first time in history that a deadly disease has been attributed to divine wrath; in fact, before the tremendous advances in medicine brought by the twentieth century, blaming fatal illnesses and epidemics on God's judgment was the rule, not the exception. Such diverse diseases as leprosy, measles, cholera and influenza have swept through human populations at various times in history, often leaving in their path outbreaks of religious intolerance as a frightened public searched for scapegoats.

Until AIDS, that kind of response was thought to be part of an ignorant and superstitious past. That changed in 1981, when scientists identified the new and deadly affliction they initially dubbed "Gay Related Immune deficiency" and the press more prosaically called the "gay plague".

By the time researchers had a clearer focus on the origins of the disease and renamed it "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome," the damage was done: AIDS was irreversibly linked in the public mind with homosexuality, itself a largely misunderstood and feared phenomenon.

The response from Christians has ranged from compassion to condemnation, from blessing to brimstone. Usually, but not always, the attitude of a church body towards homosexuality is a fair predictor of its policy towards persons-with-AIDS.

At the National Religious Broadcasters Convention in February, pentecostal Evangelist Jimmy Swaggart inveighed against "secular humanists" as those who "Finally succeeded by legislation, by other means, to bring the homosexual out of the bathroom to go to the bathhouse and now they're in the blood bank and we have AIDS as a result of it."

Southern Baptist Convention President Charles Stanley stated in January that he found it interesting that AIDS should appear on the scene just as homosexuality "has become an acceptable lifestyle in the minds of many people. Why not AIDS 50 years ago, 100 years ago?"

Stanley went on to state his belief that AIDS is God indicating His displeasure with homosexuality and to criticize the publicity surrounding the death of actor

Rock Hudson from AIDS: "It's almost as if he's become more heroic dying of AIDS...like there was nothing bad about it."

Less well known, but no less emphatic, is the Rev. Hiram Crawford of Chicago's Israel Methodist Church: "Homosexuals have been spiritually sick. Now they're physically sick and we can't have them infecting the rest of us."

And Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell takes the position that homosexuality is a violation of the laws of nature and "when a person ignores those laws there is a price to pay."

Falwell, to be fair, has called on ministers to treat persons-with-AIDS "as all people of God who are loved by Him," but it's clear his charity has its limits: "We should preach from our pulpits against...all homosexual activity or promiscuous heterosexuality which causes these various social diseases."

Hospitals and clinics which work with persons-with AIDS are beginning to screen clergy for their attitudes towards the disease and members of the largest group at risk. In Chicago there were complaints that ministers were pressuring AIDS patients on their deathbeds to renounce their homosexuality. The Sable-Scherer Clinic of Cook County Hospital now keeps a list of non-judgemental clergy who can be called upon to counsel persons-with AIDS.

But the Rev. James Corrigan, coordinator for pastoral services at Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center, says he's seen numerous cases where PWA's have turned down religious counseling of any type in an angry reaction against Christianity, which they perceive as anti-gay.

It's curious that the evangelists and denominations which place the most emphasis on divine healing so often sound the "AIDS-is-God's-judgement" theme. Television evangelist and "700 Club" host Pat Robertson, Evangelists Oral Roberts, James Robison and others have all alluded to homosexuality as the root cause of AIDS, rather than a sexually transmitted virus.

The absence of AIDS among lesbians is glossed over or never mentioned.

A radio minister in Dallas prayed over the air that God would only visit AIDS on "those people who practice wrong sexual practices" and would spare "innocent babies" in New York.

Conservative Presbyterian Dr. D. James Kennedy, best known for his "Evangelism Explosion" program in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, has just completed a two-part series on "The Bible and AIDS" in which he claims "militant homosexuals" have threatened "blood terrorism" by flooding blood banks with AIDS-infected donations if their political demands are not met.

The political possibilities inherent in the

existence of a fatal disease whose American victims have largely been gay men have not been lost on the Religious Right.

Last fall, AIDS became a front-burner issue for Houston's so-called "Straight-Slate," seven candidates for the city council whose organizer, Dr. Stephen Hotze, told them, "We must attack them (gays) where they are most vulnerable, and that is on the issue of public health."

Endorsed by the Straight Slate was former Mayor Louis Welch, who cited his opposition to gay rights as a primary reason for running against Mayor Kathy Whitmire. Welch was gaining in opinion polls when a television crew accidentally broadcast his quip that the first element of his "four-point plan" to fight AIDS would be to "shoot the queers."

None of the Straight Slate candidates were elected, and Welch was resoundingly defeated.

In California, U.S. Representative William Dannemeyer is being accused of

"gay-bashing" by State Senator Ed Davis in the Republican race for the U.S. Senate seat belonging to Democrat Alan Cranston.

Dannemeyer, a fundamentalist who says that "God's plan for man is Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve," has introduced legislation that would segregate AIDS-infected school children, withhold federal funds from cities with gay bathhouses and make it a felony offense for a member of AIDS risk groups to donate blood.

Dannemeyer, who also claims that gays commit crimes at a rate 43 times higher than heterosexuals, has contracted with the controversial Dr. Paul Cameron's Institute for the Scientific Investigation of Sexuality in Lincoln, Nebraska, to advise him on issues related to AIDS and homosexuality.

AIDS has not surfaced as a campaign issue in the battle in Washington State over gay rights laws. But Don Moreland of the Lesbian and Gay Democrats for Greater

Seattle says gay rights activists are preparing for a long and dirty fight to hang on to the gains they have made.

In Texas, AIDS is being used by Religious Right pressure groups as a justification for reinstating the state's sodomy law, Section 21.06. That law was struck down in a ruling by a Dallas judge in 1982 and the state's attorney general elected not to appeal the decision. But a group known as Dallas Doctors Against AIDS sought and found a district attorney in Amarillo who agreed to pursue and appeal.

That case currently stands before the Supreme Court, the law having been affirmed by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

At a recent press conference, members of the Religious Right groups such as Pat Robertson's Freedom Council and Alert Citizens of Texas criticized Attorney General Jim Mattox for "Attempting to assist the homosexual plaintiff in overturning the very state law that prohibits the

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Ben Sargent
Austin American Statesman

Dealing with death has been particularly difficult for gay persons accustomed to a culture that values youth, vigor, beauty and life. AIDS has brought death from a distant and ignored abstraction, forcing it into our daily lives.

I personally must frequently deal with deaths of both my elderly patients and younger AIDS patients. In my own family, death has taken both of my parents within the past two years. Many Gay people know someone who has died of AIDS.

In becoming aware of the death of others, we face the eventual certainty of our own death.

A painful facet of the AIDS epidemic is that in becoming aware of the death of others, we face the eventual certainty of our own death. We will expend a considerable amount of nervous energy to avoid this certainty and for this matter anything to do with death.

The HTLV-III anti-body testing program has symbolically highlighted this death confrontation.

Regularly in my practice, during the two-week waiting period between the drawing of the blood specimen and the reporting of the test results, my patients experience marked emotional tension and emotional growth. Whether the patient has a positive or negative anti-body test and whether the patient is healthy or sick he or she has been forced to consider his or her own death.

Emotionally healthy adults live to accept the threat of their own death usually by the age of 50. Normally, this process of self death consideration occurs when they are in their mid-forties.

I believe this confrontation with death is usually a major contributor to the so-called mid-life crises we observe when we are in our mid-forties.

The decision to live our lives regardless of death brings with it peace, joy, and harmony more prevalent in our early fifties.

It will be interesting to see if those Gay people who have been forced through a premature "Mid life crisis" around age 25 have less problems in their forties with the mid life crisis.

One of the silver linings in the storm clouds of AIDS may be the emotional growth and maturity that the Gay community has been forced to experience.

This article is written to help all of us find the glory, peace and beauty that is frequently hidden in death. Our Christian

A Christian and Gay Approach to Death from AIDS

heritage and teachings have pointed these gifts of death out to us but we, as humans, have failed to fully appreciate them for what they are, blessings.

Thank God we are mortal and thank God we are immortal. We follow a pathway that includes both life and death. We have only to look at nature to see the ongoing life and death cycle constantly being experienced.

A flower grows, buds, blooms and dies. While the blossom's death process is not pretty to watch, dying and death do bring a

Some seeds never sprout, some seeds sprout only to be nipped in the bud, while others bloom fully but do not go to seed and the rest complete the cycle. All of these flowers have their part in the divine plan.

An exploration of the beauty of the death process can perhaps best be seen in the Biblical records of the life of Christ.

Jesus Christ was young when he died. Did Christ have joy? Was His life fulfilling? Did He have a sense of purpose and was that purpose meaningful?



completeness and finality that has no controversy and creates the space for another beautiful blossom.

Thank God we are mortal and thank God we are immortal.

Did He know that He was going to die? Did He live His life in glory and fullness in spite of death?

We will consider these questions more fully later, but first, let's look at death itself more closely.

Doctor Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1) in *On Death and Dying* attempts to understand

(A Medical Professional's Perspective)

By Philip C. Richardson, M.D.

Dr. Phillip Richardson is a physician whose private practice includes a large percentage of gay persons. He is also engaged in biomedical research at the University of Texas.

the death process. She divides the emotional process of death and dying into five stages.

The dying patient passes through the stages of denial, anger, bargaining and depression, finally reaching the stage of acceptance.

This acceptance stage produces a calm and peaceful tranquility very similar to the Biblical picture of the way Christ lived and accepted His life with its joy, pain and anguish.

Doctor Kubler-Ross helps us to understand and be able to accept the difficulties we experience during death and dying by letting us see denial, anger, bargaining and depression as normal, transient and expected, facets of the process.

Jesus Christ was young when he died. Did he live His life in glory and fullness in spite of death?

The Biblical records of Jesus' life portray a person who was able to rise above the trivial issues of daily life and devote the major portion of life and work to loving others and sharing the glory of God with fellow humans here on earth.

I believe that as Gay Christians, we are to model Christ-like behavior in our own lives and facilitate that behavior in the lives of people afflicted with AIDS.

How can we as Gay Christians help our sisters and brothers dying of AIDS through the difficult preparatory stages and lengthen the period of acceptance that the person with AIDS experiences?

Dr. Kubler-Ross states that hope is the prime mover and energy source to sustain the dying patient emotionally. This hope can be in the form of a miraculous healing from God directly, a hope of a new medical cure or treatment, be it ever so slim, or simply of a better tomorrow.

Prayer can work miracles. Healing can and does occur. Planting a realistic and believable seed of hope will empower the dying patient to move through the difficult emotional growth of dying to the acceptance stage.

Although hope is the prime mover of one's emotional growth while dying, I would like to add faith and love as movers active during the death process. The classic "gifts of the Spirit," faith, hope and love,

are truly a Godsend to the dying person.

As Gay Christians we can and should share our heavenly gifts with our dying sisters and brothers. We can share our faith by living in faith through thoughts, words and deeds. Finding and encouraging the hope that is present in our patient is important.

Loving, the action verb, has healing and restorative value to all. We need to be available and "be there" for our dying brothers and sisters. We need to be there emotionally and physically. We need to be there to hear the anger, hope and depression.

More specifically, how can we as Gay Christians deal with the first stage characterized by denial?

In this stage the patient is usually unwilling to openly admit that he or she has AIDS and is unwilling to publicly or privately accept the AIDS diagnosis. Energy is spent appropriately enough in finding a second opinion and doing more laboratory work. The diagnosis may be correctly made but the patient just refuses to believe it.

When the patient is in the denial stage, don't force the person with AIDS to see the truth as you see it. The truth is that they probably know internally what is happening to them.

Internally, they are attempting to accept this reality. Forcing a confrontation at this time will not help. Love them through this stage. Listen, hear and accept.

The second stage characterized by anger requires us to listen empathetically to the person. Accept what they have to say as information, not as information requiring judgement. Do not strike back or attempt to change their mind. Listen without judgement to understand.

If the anger is focused on something or somebody, try to redirect that anger to insure that the anger is focused on the appropriate subject for that anger. Anger appropriately directed toward death might easily be directed at a trivial matter, thus wasting precious time in attempting to resolve a matter that does not need to be resolved. If the anger is directed at God, don't worry as God can handle our anger!

Be prepared to enjoy and accept many "just one more time."

The next stage is one of bargaining. It is an attempt to postpone the now apparent death and gain more time. Promises made here by the patient are not necessarily logical or rational but there promises are meaningful and worthwhile to the dying person.

I think it is important, as much as possible, to visit the beach "one more time," or see a loved one "just once more," or make the trip to the family reunion. This activity is important for the mental health of the person with AIDS and can be joyfull for all concerned.

Be prepared to enjoy and accept many "just one more times." The list tends to grow, but that's fine. Enjoy doing things together.

Psychologically, the promises made while one is bargaining can be rooted in guilt. If guilt coupled with an irrational desire for punishment are present, a clergy person, counselor, and/or support group may help the person at this point.

Sharing of our gifts of the Spirit is probably most important during the final depressive stage. This kind of depression is different than the more common reactive depression where we are depressed over some past event. In the conventional reactive depression encouraging the patient to let go of the past and to look to a "brighter tomorrow" can help.

In contrast, the anticipatory depression as seen in the dying AIDS patient is different. Anticipatory depression occurs as the AIDS patient considers loss of everything she or he loves and cherishes. Through death he or she must give up all earthly possessions, all friends and all memories.

Living our gifts at the bedside, frequently without words, can help the person with AIDS through this phase. This is where emphasis should not be placed on future hope but more emphasis given to loving acceptance of the patient.

In the acceptance phase of dying we can see and experience my perception of how Christ must have lived his life.

Death can bring with it a period of life in Christ that is beautiful to behold and experience.

The dying patient in the acceptance stage is unconcerned with trivial interpersonal differences. He or she is apt to overlook irrelevant human frailties in both oneself and others. Financial matters take on less significance and concern. Material wealth and things of this world are greatly less valued.

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With Such A Time As This...We Are Trusted

By Reverend Sherree L. Boothman
Dean, Samaritan College

Editor's Note: The following is a sermon delivered by Rev. Boothman on Samaritan Sunday, May, 1986, at the College.

Israel's great King David was a real rebel in the Jewish community of his day.

Although he made some serious mistakes in getting things done, his remarkable success as a leader of the faith community did not rest upon his own trustworthiness.

What really mattered, Biblical scholar Walter Brueggeman has written, is that *God trusted him!* God trusted David to lead the faith community during his moment in history and David trusted God to be God.

...you and I are trusted by God with this, our moment in history.

What I must deal with in my heart, and what you must deal with in your heart, is that you and I are trusted by God with this, our moment in history.

The great God of history, who has guided the faith community through the eons, has trusted us with this moment!

To be faithful to this trust is our challenge.

With such a time as this--with the AIDS epidemic worsening, with homophobia increasing, with new and menacing threats to deny the civil rights of gay persons--we are trusted.

The history of the Christian church during epidemics is not good.

Yale historian John Boswell recently compared the church's response to AIDS with that of the Middle Ages church to the bubonic plague.

He reported documented cases of monasteries literally locking their doors and killing anyone who tried to get in during a plague outbreak.

...the church's response to AIDS may well determine what kind of Christian church moves into the 21st century.

Dr. Boswell claims we are still suffering the theological damage this reaction caused. He warned that the church's response to AIDS may well determine what kind of Christian church moves into the 21st century.

Will it be a powerless church crippled by its lack of response to human suffering, a church without faith? Or will it be the powerful Church of Jesus Christ, acting faithfully as a mighty force for healing and hope in our world?

The greatest challenge we face is to remember who we are! *We are the church of Jesus Christ, a risen Christ!*

The Apostle Paul refers to us as "the body of Christ," the actual presence of the risen Christ in the world.

Will we be that powerful "body of Christ," a source of Good News to people who are sick and dying?

What does Jesus give to us now in the midst of our crisis?

First, remember we are the church of a healing Christ. Jesus Christ is described as the Great Physician.

Any church or preacher who says disease is a sign of God's judgement is



tragically unfamiliar with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You can read every story in all four gospels and discover that Jesus never made anyone sick.

You will learn, however, that every sick person who came to Jesus was healed!

And this ministry of healing is entrusted to those who follow Jesus.

God does not make people sick. God acts to heal, and God challenges us to become part of the answer.

We must also remember that we are the church of a *human* Christ. Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ experienced the feelings and fears common to all of us.

Recently, I was re-reading the Passion

Narratives, the story of Holy Week in the Gospels. Suddenly, I saw something I have never seen before; I saw Holy Week in a new way.

During Holy Week Jesus was grieving his own death, and he experienced all five stages of grief defined by Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross.

Only during Holy Week do we see Jesus' anger.

Any church or preacher who says disease is a sign of God's judgement is tragically unfamiliar with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

He goes into the temple and finds a bunch of cheating money changers. Jesus goes into a rage, throwing things, breaking things, and literally yells and screams them out of the temple. Theologians have called this "righteous indignation." It's anger!

Then at Gethsemane we see Jesus' denial and bargaining. "Oh God, if you would take this cup away from me."

In the trials, we see Jesus' depression. I never could understand why Jesus hardly said a word during all the trials.

Pilate says, "Are you King of the Jews?"

Jesus says, "That's what you say."

That is depression.

And then on the cross, in the depths of suffering, Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!"

Have you ever hurt so deeply you didn't believe God cared at all, and all you could do was scream "why!"

Jesus did.

In the moments before he died, the peaceful acceptance came. "Abba, into your hands I commend my spirit."

The Good News for me was that grieving is not sinful. That the anger and rage we feel when we lose someone or something we loved is not sinful, it is perfectly natural.

Grieving is what we in our faith call "Holy Week." When Jesus grieved, we called it "Holy." I dare say that when we grieve Jesus calls it "holy."

If we follow Christ, then we too are sometimes a grieving people. When horrible things happen to people we love, we need to grieve. It is God's gift to us. It is the process through which we heal. And because it is a time of healing, it is holy.

I was raised an orphan. My mother died of cancer when I was six and my father of a major heart attack when I was eleven.

I went to live with an aunt and uncle.

As I was growing up, my family con-

tinued to die. Death of people that I loved was always an issue in my life.

My family was not good at grieving. In fact, they knew nothing about grieving.

When my mother died, my father took all her pictures and everything that was hers and put it in a crate and shipped it to some relatives five hundred miles away. I didn't see the contents until six months ago.

We were not allowed to speak her name and relatives were not allowed to talk to us about her. She was dead; she was gone; we were to go on.

I have since learned that this almost killed me. I almost did not survive, because I was not allowed to grieve.

As the AIDS crisis began worsening and more and more of my friends began dying, I felt like I ought to know something.

I ought to have something to give my people in this crisis about living with dying.

After all, I had always lived with people that I loved dying.

This past December, I finally found it.

I was talking with my therapist and casually mentioned that I had thought, or had imagined, I felt my mother with me at different times in my life. Southern Presbyterians don't talk about such things, and I was raised Southern Presbyterian.

My therapist said, "What do you mean you 'think?' She was with you! Sherre, your mother never left you."

Finally, it dawned on me. We have this doctrine called the Communion of Saints which is tacked on the end of the Apostles' Creed which Southern Presbyterians never talked about.

That doctrine is real! It is not a religious excuse for Halloween. It is real!

Everytime we gather at the communion table, everyone who has gone before us gathers with us, really! Not magically or mysteriously, *really!*

In truth, in whatever ways you and I have lost Jesus Christ to that cross, we have lost everyone who has ever died. But, in whatever ways you and I still have Jesus Christ today, we have everyone who has gone before us right now!

When you need them, call on them. When you want them, let them be with you. They can be with you.

"God is love." I believe this is true, even though it's been terribly over-used. Whatever you and I build in love can not be broken. It cannot be broken by a bad day or a horrible argument. It cannot be broken by years of disagreement. It cannot even be broken by death itself.

**You can never lose
anyone you have
loved freely and
abidingly.**

We need not fear to love. Whoever you love; whoever you build in love with, you

can never lose. You can never lose anyone you have loved freely and abidingly.

Like David, trusted; we are trusted to love.

And if you err on the side of living too fully, fine, but don't lock your heart away or you will have nothing at all; only love cannot be destroyed by anything in this world or the next.

Love is stronger than anything! Truly, whatever we build in love is eternal because it is as if it were God.

However, death does severely change things, and when someone dies, we lose a lot. Please grieve: cry, be angry, sleep extra, do not force yourself to do as much. Don't go on a diet when you are grieving.

It is not selfish to grieve. It is not denial of our faith in resurrection. For surely if anyone knew the certainty of resurrection it was Jesus and he spent a week grieving horribly.

What I know about grieving that I can give to you is that it is very hard. There is no way around it. It is very painful.

I also know that it is best shared. Share it with someone you trust with your heart.

You need never grieve alone like I did.

We are all grown up now. We can do what we want. We can hold each other when we cry. We can let each other be angry.

We can understand and be supportive to each other when we are depressed. We can let each other grieve and experience our losses and begin to be resurrected our-

selves.

We can, together, go through our crucifixions to our resurrections.

Right now, with such a time as this, we need to learn to grieve together! We need not abandon each other in this crisis. We need to hold to each other.

**We need to learn to
live fully and love
fully today, and to
trust that it will be
forever, whatever
happens.**

We need to hold to the people with AIDS and ARC. We need to learn to live fully and love fully today, and to trust that it will be forever, whatever happens.

We are indeed the church of a *risen* Christ! We are created to live healthy, happy, and free lives.

When brokenness invades, and it does in all of our lives, we learn to heal. This our God has given to us.

God has given us each other that we can grieve together, that we may be comforted; and we grieve with God remembering that God calls it Holy.

We are truly a Holy people, made in God's image, and when we grieve, it is through our healing that we affirm ever stronger the mighty hand of God upon our lives for resurrection, forever and ever! Amen!

UFMCC Committee on AIDS Meets in Los Angeles **By Reverend Steve Pieters**

On April 17 and 18, 1986, the AIDS Program Design Committee, appointed by the General Council at their most recent meeting, gathered in Los Angeles to accomplish the tasks it was assigned. These include creating a job description for the UFMCC AIDS ministry coordinator and setting priorities for the educational and fund-raising activities for the coming year.

The Committee consists of Rev. Mary Moore (Chairperson), Rev. Loni Allen, Rev. Sherre Boothman, Rev. Ed Helms, Rev. Steve Pieters and Rev. Nancy Radclyffe.

The program coordinator for AIDS ministry will be appointed by the Moderator of UFMCC, and will serve as executive officer of the AIDS ministry in the Fellowship.

He/she will provide opportunities for the training of the UFMCC membership, as well as direct and supervise all activities of the AIDS ministry. This person will further be responsible to confer with other UFMCC program agencies regarding cooperative or supplementary services.

Funds to support the salary of the AIDS ministry coordinator and the budget of the program will be raised on Saturday night of an AIDS vigil weekend in September, organized by Rev. David Farrell, pastor of

the MCC—San Diego. With the success of this event, it is hoped the program coordinator will begin work on October 1, 1986.

Planned activities for the coming year also include special programs for the training of clergy and laity by the UFMCC's Samaritan College, a Third World Conference entitled "AIDS: Embracing Hope and Healing" and an international focus on AIDS to be planned for the 1987 Lenten season.

This full calendar of activities is designed to educate the UFMCC about AIDS, as well as provide opportunities for sharing and support, due to the intense nature of AIDS ministry.

The Committee is highly dedicated to seeing a Fellowship-wide AIDS ministry program become a reality. Following its meeting in April, the group expressed optimism that the AIDS ministry is shaping up to be one of the most dynamic programs the Fellowship has seen.

AIDS is a dreadful reality in our world, but we are preparing to meet this challenge with a well-thought-out and fully-funded program which will embody God's loving support of all of us as we face and battle this deadly epidemic.

AIDS: A Gay Man's Journey

By Reverend Steve Pieters

By the grace of God and the help of a lot of people, I'm still alive, more than two years past my diagnosis of AIDS, and almost four years since I started getting sick.

My two cancers, lymphoma and Kaposi's Sarcoma, have been in complete remission for almost a full year.

I continue to be actively involved as the Secretary of the Board of Directors of the AIDS Project/Los Angeles, and as a member of the Executive Committee of the Los Angeles City/County AIDS Task Force.

My life since diagnosis has been charmed with many fantasies come true. I've been interviewed by Tom Snyder, Rona Barrett, and Tammy Faye Bakker. At a variety of speaking engagements, I've been introduced by Shirley MacLaine, Ted Danson and Patty Duke. I've tap danced in front of Elizabeth Taylor, Burt Reynolds, Linda Evans and 250 other major stars of this or any other season!

An article about me in the Los Angeles Sunday Times was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. I've hobnobbed at a variety of events with Burt Lancaster, Phil Donahue, Marlo Thomas, Morgan Fairchild, Diahann Carroll, Sammy Davis, Jr., Madonna and Sean Penn, Richard Dreyfuss, Rod Stewart, Cindy Lauper, Cher and the casts of *Dynasty* and *Knot's Landing*. I went to Della Reese's Christmas tree trimming party.

I've been honored with awards, from MCC as well as from the Episcopalian Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and the West Hollywood Presbyterian Church.

In the midst of all this glamor and excitement, I have lost more friends to AIDS than I care to count. Funerals and memorial services are as regular as Sunday worship.

I've been through a rough experimental chemotherapy (suramin), which burned out my adrenal glands and nearly killed me in October, then caused neurological damage, leaving me quite weak and helpless in February.

But I have fought back, and God has graced me once again with good health, energy, and strength. I have been off suramin now for four months.

I finally had the relationship I was longing for. A man I had loved while I was in Hartford moved to LA in March of 1985 to be my lover. I had just decided to accept the invitation to be a part of the suramin study, and Temp agreed to come out and be with me.



I was ecstatic: at last I had a lover, someone to live with and love with, someone to share in my adventure of living with AIDS.

It worked for a while. But by July it was apparent that we were both very unhappy with the situation. I remember feeling that life is too short to be involved in something as destructive as this relationship.

When he moved out in August, we cried in each other's arms.

For quite a while after, I continued to grieve the passing of my romantic illusions. And out of this grief process, I hope I have

come to a healthy acceptance of being single, and a healthier attitude towards relationships. But I got what I wanted: I had a lover, for a while. Another prayer was answered, and I learned a lot!

But the most important lessons have been in facing pain, fear and stigma. I have begun to learn to transform these difficult realities of having AIDS.

I am learning to translate these experiences into creative opportunities, chances to transcend the deadly destructive attitudes around me as a person with AIDS into living, growing experiences.

One of the things that I have feared the most is dying alone. I faced that fear in October, 1985, when I found myself hovering near death in the "Red Blanket Room" (or Emergency Triage) of LA County Hospital.

I had been deteriorating for about a month, losing weight, energy and strength.

The doctors in charge of the experimental protocol had just discovered that my adrenal glands were failing, and they ordered my immediate hospitalization to receive cortisone treatments, which were supposed to recover my energy, strength and appetite, or, in other words, save my life. They didn't make it clear how serious the situation, nor did I understand until later how rapidly I was failing.

I checked into the emergency room where I was lost for three hours. When they finally "found" me, I was in x-ray for another hour.

When I was wheeled into triage, instead of administering the cortisone as ordered, the Red Blanket Room doctors took my history orally three times (it was now 1-2 a.m.), and argued about whether my x-ray seemed to show signs of pneumocystis, the AIDS-related pneumonia.

They kept sticking me for blood tests, and were having more and more trouble getting any blood. My blood pressure was 50/30, and the nurse who took it shook her head with resigned frustration.

I kept asking for the cortisone with what little strength I had left, and they kept saying they had to check out all the possibilities. My own doctors were not there. I couldn't call any of my support group. They took away all my valuables.

One more time they came at my left arm to get blood. They said, "Stephen, pump your hand."

I looked down at my still hand, and wondered "Why isn't he moving his hand?"

I looked up at the doctors and nurses

s Health Experience

rs Clergy-on-Staff MCC in the Valley

around my bed, and felt incredible pain. I closed my eyes to concentrate on breathing through the pain, as I had practiced over the last year and a half. With each breath, I prayed, "Lord Jesus Christ, have love upon me, a good fairy."

And on one exhale, I let go, and there was no pain. I floated peacefully. I felt a peace that I cannot explain.

I felt an awareness of my Self. I felt God's presence in a way that was very familiar, yet more complete than I had ever felt before. Everything felt perfect, and I was at rest. Nothing mattered, except that peace.

And suddenly I was in pain again, and I was angry at the doctors for not giving me the cortisone. They finally hooked me up to a cortisone drip, and I began to get better.

The doctors later told me I almost died, and I believe I was slipping away in that moment of peace. And I was alone, without friends or family.

I realized that my fear of dying alone was irrelevant. I no longer fear dying, and I also know that dying does not require anyone around me: it is a very solitary experience. And not in an unpleasant way.

I believe it is something that just happens, and if I can just concentrate on the love and the peace of God, it will not be difficult.

What a feeling of victory, I have faced my greatest fear, and found the love of God there. I still get scared, but now when I experience fear in myself or others, I try to meet it with that sense of God's love and peace that I experienced that night in October, and I find I get through that moment. People even call me courageous!

I have been scared to death, but now I like to think of myself as being scared to life.

I remember William Sloane Coffin giving a lecture in Springfield, Massachusetts, five or six years ago. He talked about the woman with the twelve-year hemorrhage in the Gospel of Mark. When she was healed through touching Jesus' garment, she fell down in fear and trembling.

He pointed out that many of us fall down in fear and trembling when we experience the touch of the Divine. And when God touches us with healing, or a sense of wholeness, or even a call, instead of being scared to death, hopefully we will be scared to life.

I have also learned to face the stigma of the purple spots of Kaposi's Sarcoma. I am



fond of reminding people that purple is a powerful color for those of us who are lesbian or gay. Judy Grahn, in her book, *Another Mother Tongue: Gay Words, Gay Worlds* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984) points out that purple has for centuries been considered a Gay color, and the color of spiritual power and transformation.

Now many of us are experiencing purple spots. I am trying to teach people to stop seeing them as something to be scared of, as signs of death and decay.

I am learning to see them as a sign of

spiritual transformation. It has been my own experience, that as I have opened up to my purple spots, to the reality of my disease, that I have experienced spiritual gifts that I have never before experienced in my life.

And it's been my experience with at least some other people with AIDS, that as they have opened to their purple spots, and subsequently to their deaths, they have been filled with a unique spiritual power. And our fear becomes courage, and our pain becomes love and compassion for others.

As a people of faith, those of us in MCC are called to help that transformation happen for more people: we are called to transform the stigma of the purple spots of KS into signs of spiritual power and transition: Power to battle the fear associated with AIDS.

We must get over our fear and see the power and the gift that is here for us in the AIDS crisis. It's a hard gift to accept.

I know one man who did accept this gift: a friend I'll call Alex.

He rode in the LA Lesbian/Gay Pride Parade last summer. He was covered with KS lesions, and at the start of the parade he wore a huge sun bonnet, scarf and sunglasses to hide his purple face.

But as the parade got underway, he took his protective clothing off, and he showed his color. It had a remarkable effect on the crowd. Some people turned their faces away. But most people applauded Alex.

Many broke through the lines of the parade, and came up and shook his hand or hugged him. Many of his friends told him how proud of him they were.

He sat up proudly, with a familiar gleam in his eye. For once, he was not ashamed of the purple lesions covering his face, and people learned from him. And Alex looked more joyful than I had seen him in a long time.

He died two weeks later.

Celie writes to Nettie in *The Color Purple* that she thinks it angers God if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it. (Walker, Alice, *The Color Purple*, New York: Pocketbooks, 1982.)

And so I dare to see the purple spots of Kaposi's Sarcoma not as signs of death, decay and stigma, but as a sign of spiritual opportunity: an opportunity for God's grace to be made manifest in the form of courage and compassion.



AIDS VIGIL OF PRAYER

SEPTEMBER 5, 6, 7, 1986

"This event will be the most important in the history of our denomination as far as our dedication to seeing that ministry to persons with AIDS is publicized as we pray together for a cure to this dreaded disease. It is imperative that every congregation within the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches be involved in this event."

Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry

"The upcoming AIDS Vigil is a rallying point for MCC in this time of challenge and crisis. If we believe that prayer REALLY changes things, if we believe that God can move through our collective action we must KEEP THIS VIGIL!"

Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson

For fifty hours in September persons of many faiths, of varied cultures and in many countries will join together in a common bond of continuous prayer in MCCs throughout the World. UFMCC has called for a **Vigil of Prayer** on September 5—7 for persons with AIDS, their families and friends and all who minister to and work with those persons. All who believe in a loving God of healing have been encouraged to join in the time of prayer.

Rev. David Ferrell, pastor of MCC San Diego, is coordinator of the **Vigil of Prayer**. "So many issues divide the people of God," Ferrell acknowledges, "But in one thing people of faith have always been united—our belief in the power of God, through our prayer, to bring healing and hope to the suffering, the ill, the dying and bereaved. This weekend **Vigil of Prayer** is about human pain and grief, suffering and loss with which we all identify. Together we can create in our communities a climate of compassion and concern for the grief caused by AIDS."

The **Vigil of Prayer** will also sponsor educational programming, workshops and seminars on a wide variety of AIDS-related concerns. Since all churches have unique local situations, each church will have its own schedule.

Offerings taken during worship services which will be a part of the vigil will be designated for a local AIDS project and the Center for AIDS Ministry for UFMCC.

***Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, ah, leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me!***

***All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.***

*(From Jesus Lover of My Soul
Charles Wesley, Simeon B. Marsh)*

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

WE HAVE BEGUN...

The Consultation Between UFMCC and NCCC

By Reverend-Elect Sandra L. Robinson
Co-director of the Department of
Ecumenical Relations of UFMCC

The first consultation between UFMCC and the National Council of Churches of Christ was held immediately after the NCCC Governing Board meetings in New Orleans, La., May 23-24, 1986.

Guest lecturers, Dr. Robin Scroggs, professor of New Testament, Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago, Ill., and Dr. Byron Shafer, professor of biblical studies, Fordham University, New York City, N.Y., brought a scholarly exegesis of scriptures commonly attributed to condemnation of homosexuality. Some in the consultation believed them to be biased in their presentations toward a positive view.

There was, miraculously, equal representation between the NCCC and UFMCC and there was male-female, clergy-lay parity. Of fourteen UFMCC representatives and fifteen NCCC representatives, there were two Black females, one Black male and one Hispanic clergywoman.

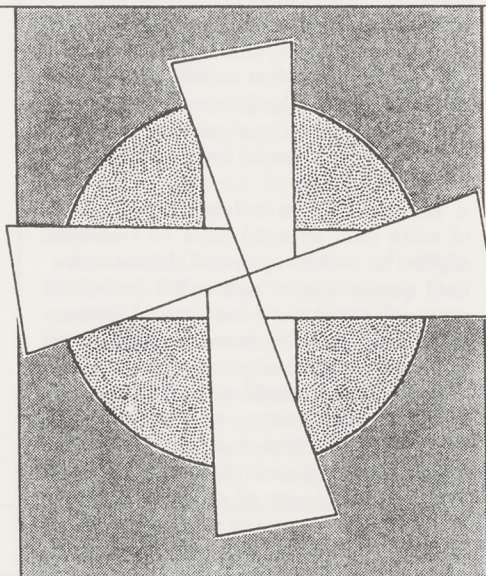
UFMCC representation came from Texas, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Maryland, California, Ohio and Oklahoma including two Elders and the editor of "Journey" magazine as Press person.

The NCCC representation included the Greek Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Church of America, the Antiochian Orthodox Church, the CME Methodist (Black) Church, the Moravian Church, the Swedenborgian Church, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Society of Friends), the United Methodist Church, United Church of Christ, Church of the Brethren, the Reformed Church, the Episcopal Church, the Disciples of Christ, the Presbyterian Church and the International Council of Community Churches. Among this number were two Bishops.

This dialogue on biblical interpretation included time for five small groups to form and share feelings. The lectures happened between these sharings.

The major concern about the dialogue from some NCCC people was that the lectures sounded biased in favor of UFMCC's position. The planning committee was unable to think of a biblical scholar who had done concentrated research on Homosexuality and the Bible with conservative or anti-homosexual conclusions.

Just before the beginning of the dialogue, we (UFMCC) were anxious and excited as we prepared to do what had



never been done before. We shared information and prayed together before meeting with the NCCC. We knew that we would birth new stories and new information.

The following are UFMCC his/her-storyans for Dialogue I:

Ms. Beryl Dixie Kalen, La.
Rev. John Gill, Texas
Ms. Char Wilkins, La.
Mr. Frank Zirelli, Calif.
Rev. Elder Dr. Nancy Wilson, Calif.
Ms. Sandra Robinson, Ohio
Rev. Joseph Gilbert, Penn.
Rev. Jennie Boyd Bull, MD.
Mr. Tim Sears, Texas
Rev. Alice Jones, Ok.
Mr. John Phlegar, Texas
Ms. Annette Beall, Texas
Rev. Elder Don Eastman, Texas
Rev. David Day, Texas

Discussions were unique to each group. These diverse groups shared experiences, pain, joy and information that was new (for the most part) to NCCC participants.

It was moving to watch a Black CME pastor suddenly challenged by information new to his belief structure; it was awesome to hear empathy and compassion come from a young Hispanic woman who began to deal with issues that challenged her and revealed new truth to her.

Some of us began to understand more clearly how significant a role sexism plays in homophobia. It seems that the major objection of homophobic people to homosexuality is their perception that male homosexuals are too feminine! Lesbians, according to some homophobes, refuse to stay in a woman's "place". If we did, then the assumption is, we would not be Lesbians. This observation came from table discussion and was not necessarily the view held by the participants.

Dr. Scroggs and Dr. Shafer, brought to us information that was basically not new to UFMCC, but their personal perspectives challenged us and caused us to stretch for deeper meanings.

It is obvious to all of us who were present that this kind of dialogue is absolutely necessary for our growth as a Fellowship (denomination) and for the growth and understanding of mainline denominations.

At the end of the dialogue, most of us were adamant that we should all experience together dialogues II and III, for continuity because of the amount of new information presented and because of the questions raised. These dialogues will help UFMCC to understand better how to proceed in our ecumenical involvement when the dialogue is completed.

POSITION OF AIDS MINISTRY COORDINATOR FOR UFMCC

will be open later this year. The coordinator will serve as the executive officer for the AIDS Ministry for UFMCC.

For specific information please write to:

Reverend Troy D. Perry
UFMCC
Suite 304
5300 Santa Monica Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90029

VARIED VIEWS FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

I remembered the Lord *Jonah 2:7*

By Bishop John K. Groves
Omni Community Church San Diego, California

(Editor's Note: In January of 1986 MCC San Diego held a 50-hour vigil of prayer. MCC San Diego has occasionally been picketed by a group called Bible Missionary Fellowship. One of the San Diego area clergy who came to pray with the persons at MCC during the vigil was Bishop John K. Groves, pastor of OMNI Community Church and the World for Christ Evangelistic Services. He wrote the following article which appeared in the San Diego Voice and Viewpoint and is reprinted here with the permission of Bishop Groves.)

JONAH 2:7

By Bishop John K. Groves

Jonah gives a graphic picture of his time spent in the belly of the great fish the Lord had prepared for him. It must have been quite a horrifying journey in inky darkness, smelling, tasting, and feeling digestive juices, that may have given him a burning or stinging sensation.

He did not know where he was geographically, but he could tell when his captor dove deeper in the sea. He tells of seaweed wrapped about his head. I'm sure other fish and debris slapped his unexpected face, and banged into him. Maybe other fish swallowed whole by this "monster" took nibbles at his ear lobes.

In total desperation, frightened, knowing that his world was about to come to a close, Jonah tells us in his writing, "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple." And then he goes on to say, "And the Lord spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land."

AIDS is the most feared plague around the world today. Medical researchers are baffled because the virus, as they call it, is not constant or stable. Since the disease has been recognized as such, microscopic observation shows that the cells of AIDS today are not necessarily like the AIDS cells of two weeks, two months, or two years ago.

AIDS cells are erratic: therefore researchers are not having an easy job finding cures. Some meds have worked very well with the few patients who've had longevity of more than two years with diagnosed AIDS. Yet 98% of the diagnosed AIDS patients die within two years.

The medicine that seems to be helping the 2% has done nothing for the masses.

Our medical world, to say nothing of the public at large, out of fear is reminiscent of Jonah in the dark belly of the great fish.

We do not control the AIDS situation! The seaweed of AIDS is wrapped around our heads and unless something medical or divine comes along more positive than we've had over the past years, we know as Jonah did, our world (our very lives) is coming to an end.

We who believe in Jehovah-jireh (God of more than enough) have no real conception as to how great a God we serve. God always has a "ram in the bush," to satisfy all situations if we but look prayerfully enough, and stop missing the forest for looking at the trees.

When Isaac's world was about to end, Abraham was given a ram in the bush. Throughout the Bible history God has had an assortment of ram types, be it the angel who wrestled Jacob all night, or Balaam's ass that God opened its mouth to speak to Balaam (Numbers 22). To Moses the ram appeared in the form of a burning bush that was not consumed.

In the midst of scientific research frustration, and a country troubled with homophobia both from inside the homosexual community and without, God quiets one man in this city who surely as Jonah, "I'll remember (call upon) the Lord! I'll ask others to join me."

Peter had a similar experience when he lost his faith while walking atop that water, but he expressed himself a bit differently than Jonah. One the way down beneath the sea, Peter cried out, "Lord save me!" (Matt. 14:30-32) Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand, catching Peter, and they walked together onto the ship.

God heard the cry! Jonah said he humbled and prayed, and then God spoke to the fish to let him go, not out in the middle of the sea, but on dry land.

Thank you Rev. Farrell for being that possible ram in the bush, for being a type of Jonah, and a type of Peter, remembering the Lord, and calling upon Him for help. Thank you who responded by attending the MCC 50 hour prayer vigil, or by holding special prayer sessions in your own churches and homes. You too served as rams in the bush, as types of Jonah and Peter.

Rev. Farrell's letter sent to 1,300 churches in San Diego County showed signs of a Shepherd not only concerned for his flock, but for the flocks of others. Rev. Farrell fully recognizes the fact that AIDS is

not a disease attacking homosexual males only. It is attacking mankind, and womankind, also childrenkind as well. And so his church in North Park held a 50 hour prayer vigil, the first weekend in 1986 asking God to bring AIDS down to its knees.

Not only was this vigil for AIDS. It was for other diseases that are life threatening, and also for emotional pains, hurt and suffering of all kinds. Of course the emphasis was on AIDS.

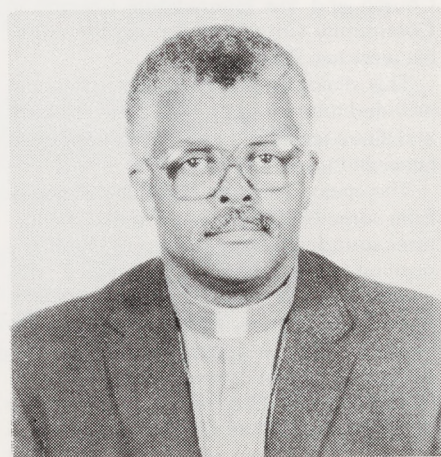
In the letter Rev. Farrell mailed, according to the San Diego Union, as I did not see one, he said, "This weekend vigil is not about lifestyles. You are not being asked to condemn or condone anyone's sexual orientation, political or religious beliefs, or practices. This vigil of prayer is about human pain and grief, suffering and loss, with which we can all identify."

I attended the Saturday night service at MCC and the closing vigil service on Sunday evening. The house was packed both nights.

I saw heterosexual and homosexual people hold hands praying with tears flowing down their faces. I saw heterosexual and homosexual people embrace one another crying over the loss of someone loved.

I saw starched Dads trying to act like it was a speck of dust in the eye. My heart wept for Moms, and sisters, grandparents, and brothers who stood or sat weeping over the loss of someone loved, to this plague we call AIDS.

As redundant as it might be, I want you to know that on the two evenings I was at MCC the house was packed to standing room, and the heterosexual world, and homosexual world embraced one another,



VARIED VIEWS FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

not condoning, not condemning, but sharing in "human pain and grief, suffering and loss."

In my opinion the leaders and members of the Bible Missionary Fellowship are a disgrace to the Christian Community. They are blinded by their own bigotry, and puffed up with spiritual pride.

It is my opinion that they know nothing of the true meaning of Matt 22:35-40, which gives us two commandments from Jesus that replaces all the law given before Jesus came to earth.

I sincerely pray that you, reader, will learn more from Christ than the Bible Missionary Fellowship has.

Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

It is impossible to love the Lord without loving your neighbour as you love yourself. To please God we must love those we

like, and those we don't consider likeable. The key is we must love each group equally. Scripture does not preclude the membership of the Metropolitan Community Church as your neighbour.

Why don't they treat others as they wish to be treated? Neighbour is anyone and everyone. We must love neighbours as we love ourselves! This does not mean we agree. Rev. Farrell made that clear in his letter to the churches.

The God I know is not a God of hate and vengefulness. Only the narrow minded with tunnel vision will say AIDS is God's curse against homosexuals when the world is threatened by death from the disease. AIDS is no curse, but it is a plague.

If indeed the members of Bible Missionary Fellowship are Christians, they have a full time job there in Santee learning the true worth and meaning of God's Word. After accomplishing this, they can then teach their local community what it means to love and not hate.

For all you Jonah types who "remembered the Lord," during the 50 hour

prayer vigil, God will hear and He'll not let AIDS, or cancer, or heart trouble, keep their weeds wrapped around your head. He'll respond, and you'll find dry ground to stand on.

Hold to that little mustard seed size faith that you have. AIDS, nor mental sickness, nor drugs or anything will carry you under, thereby taking your life.

You're even right now close enough for Him who said, "Come," to stretch for his hand catching you. Like the Jonahs who will find dry ground, you will walk back on to the ship of life a conqueror.

To you who are in some way personally touched by AIDS, the writer of Ps 30:5 says to you, "...weeping may endure for a night, but joy (GREAT JOY!) cometh in the morning."

To every blood bought Holy Ghost filled child of God (this leaves out the bigots, protestors, Moral Majority or Falwell's new sheep's garment "Liberty Federation") I say to you that AIDS will be no more because... "GREATER IS HE THAT IS IN YOU THAN HE THAT IS IN THE WORLD."

A Medical Professional's Perspective

Continued from Page 10

Family, friends and loved ones take on new meaning and value. Saying good-bye to friends and expressing love and forgiveness abounds and is beautiful. Arguments and differences can be resolved by forgiveness, pardon and love.

After resolution of conflicts is completed, the patient requires more rest and sleep and usually retreats from social contact. This prepares the patient for passage through the doorway of death which all

must pass through alone to reunite with their Creator.

Let the person with AIDS set the pace through the various stages of death and dying described above. Try not to rush the person with AIDS through the difficult stages, but try to experience them with the individual.

Experience flowers along the path and let the person with AIDS lead. Remember that energy for movement on the final part of the pathway of life comes from hope coupled with faith and love.

Death is not beautiful in and by itself. Death is not to be sought, but death is desirable. For the person with AIDS, death can bring with it a period of life in Christ that is beautiful to behold and experience.

Someday we all will face death. Eventually death will come to us all.

Hallelujah!

1. "On Death and Dying" by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc New York 1969

BATHHOUSE TO BECOME HOMELESS SHELTER

By Bill Kenkelen
Correspondent
Religious News Service

SAN FRANCISCO (RNS)--The Episcopal Church here is renovating a former gay bathhouse for use as a 24-hour shelter and care facility for the homeless.

The bath house, used for years as a haven for anonymous sex among gay men, closed recently for lack of business because, many believe, of the scare of the AIDS epidemic.

The Rev. William Nern, director of the Episcopal Church's homeless programs, said the facility is "perfect" for their purposes.

The facility includes scores of cubicles with single beds in them. The facility's hot tub will be planked over and used as a chapel.

Mr. Nern said the facility will also be used for health, mental health and drug abuse programs.

He said he hopes to house up to 200 homeless people beginning in July. The

bathhouse will replace a smaller building now being used by the Episcopal Sanctuary program one block away.

The Episcopal Sanctuary program for the homeless began in the basement of Grace Cathedral four years ago.

Now the program is the largest in the city. Mr. Nern said about 20 percent of the \$1 million budget for the shelter program at the new facility will be paid from Episcopal Church funds. The rest, he said, will come from federal, state and local government funds and private donations.

VARIED VIEWS FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

Catholic Archdiocese Stresses Positive Image of Homosexuality



By Kevin McLaughlin
Staff Writer
Religious News Service

NEW YORK (RNS)--The Archdiocesan Gay/Lesbian Outreach (AGLO), a pastoral ministry of the Catholic archdiocese of Baltimore, Md., has released a booklet that stresses positive images of homosexuality while downplaying the church's traditional censure of homosexual acts.

The booklet, "Homosexuality: A

Positive Catholic Perspective," calls homosexuality a "natural and normal variant of human sexual makeup" and carefully distinguishes between a homosexual orientation, which it calls "not sinful," and homogenital acts, which the Catholic Church has consistently taught are sinful. AGLO professes to support this teaching, although it seems to do so reluctantly.

"An official diocesan ministry cannot deny explicit Catholic teaching, although individually we may attempt to rethink or develop its application to concrete situations," the document reads. "While being cognizant of new moral directions for Lesbian/Gay sexuality, AGLO accepts the traditional position of the church as a given reality."

The document describes the church's prohibition of homosexual acts only briefly, calling it an "already well-known moral teaching." Instead AGLO stresses the importance of pastoral care and political rights for homosexuals.

"The emphasis was not to reiterate what everyone already knows," said the Rev. Joseph B. Hughes, AGLO coordinator. "The booklet is pastoral in purpose."

"It's a fairly progressive document in that it emphasizes the positive aspects of the church's pastoral ministry to homosexuals," said the Rev. Paul K. Thomas, the AGLO team member who wrote the document. "It doesn't take the moral issue and bang it over people's heads."

Father Thomas stressed that the church traditionally de-emphasizes the moral issue in pastoral care to heterosexuals until they are ready to accept church teaching.

"When it comes to homosexuals it is almost always the first thing that comes out," he added.

The AGLO statement devotes a chapter to supporting civil rights for gays, while attempting to calm the fears of those who foresee a resultant decline in family life or homosexual teachers influencing children's sexual orientation. The document labels those who predict such negative consequences "religious fanatics."

In 1980, Baltimore Archbishop William Borders came out against a proposed gay civil rights bill that subsequently was defeated. AGLO was established after the archbishop admitted that a "a lot of people were hurt" by his stand against the bill. In 1985 a gay rights bill again failed to pass, although Archbishop Borders took no public position on it. According to an archdiocesan spokesman, the prelate felt that different wording in the new bill did not condone homosexual acts.

According to Father Thomas, the archbishop saw the booklet in its original form

as a series of articles in the archdiocesan newspaper, "and he had no objection to them."

In other chapters, the AGLO document attempts to puncture negative stereotypes of homosexuals and discredit psychological opinions that describe homosexuality as an abnormality.

"Just as certain Catholics continue to resist changes of the Second Vatican Council, so some medical doctors will make questionable assertions about the nature of homosexuality," the document asserts.

The statement contains chapters for parents of gay children and for adolescents who think they are homosexual. For the latter, AGLO recommends joining gay support groups such as DIGNITY, a Catholic gay organization.

"By accepting and affirming your gay/lesbian identity, you can certainly attain both wholeness and holiness in the sight of God," the document says.

Four chapters are devoted to explaining biblical censures of homosexual acts found in the books of Genesis, Leviticus and the Pauline epistles.

"Certain scriptural passages, which reflect the primitive thought of their particular time, may even seem totally inadequate for today's changed circumstances," AGLO states. "Scriptural writers, like many uninformed persons today, referred to homosexuality under the influence of primitive ideas about causes and characteristics."

The document asserts that many examples of same-sex love and friendship exist in scripture and tradition, and cites examples Ruth, David, St. Aelred of Rievaulx and even Jesus.

"Jesus himself cherished a very special love both for his friend Lazarus...and for the apostle John," the AGLO document states.

Father Thomas denies that AGLO has watered down biblical texts for its own purposes.

"The basic thrust is to explain the negative statements," he said. "I'm placing them into their broader context."

He said the response to the document in Baltimore has been about evenly divided positively and negatively.

"All the people responding negatively always respond to the moral position," he said.

Father Hughes claims that other dioceses in the United States have ordered copies of the document as aid in formulating their own pastoral response to homosexuals. The 60-page statement, written in a question-and-answer format, is available for \$2.00 per copy from AGLO, 2034 Park Ave., Baltimore, Md. 21217.

VARIED VIEWS FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

Affirmation labels United Methodist Response to AIDS as Slow and Inadequate

SEATTLE (UNMS)—“Slow and still inadequate,” United Methodist responses to AIDS, “have reinforced a preference for judgement over compassion toward those most at risk for this disease,” said the denomination’s caucus for Gay and Lesbian Concerns at its annual meeting here April 4–6.

Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian/Gay Concerns acknowledged that two of its early leaders have been claimed by AIDS.

“[We have] experienced firsthand not only the grief of these losses but also the violence of homophobia fueled by AIDS hysteria,” the caucus reported.

While acknowledging preliminary efforts of some congregations, agencies and conferences of the United Methodist Church, Affirmation members called for increased action at all levels of the church, requesting

that:

- *church leaders reject claims that AIDS is God’s revenge on gays;

- *the United Methodist Council of Bishops prepare a pastoral letter on the subject of AIDS;

- *resources be developed for pastoral support for persons with AIDS and their loved ones;

- *funds set aside for health-care services be used in part to help meet AIDS-related medical, spiritual and physical needs;

- *church members support effective and explicit “risk-reduction efforts” for gay and bisexual men, intravenous drug abusers and others at risk from the disease;

- *all United Methodists pray for persons with AIDS and for all others affected by this disease.

Re-elected to serve as the co-spokespersons for the caucus were Morris

Floyd, Minneapolis, Minn., and Mary Gaddis, Holy City, Calif.

During business sessions, Affirmation members:

- *tentatively set Spring 1987 as the date for a consultation involving “reconciling” congregations that have made a commitment to publicly welcome gay men and lesbians as “equal members” of their church families;

- *made plans to expand *Manna for the Journey*, a quarterly journal for the Reconciling Congregation Program;

- *agreed to host a national “Family Reunion” retreat July 1–5, 1987.

The next meeting of Affirmation is scheduled for Sept. 19–21 in Washington. Affirmation chapters exist in 18 areas, up from 7 in April 1985. Regional gatherings for Affirmation members are planned beginning later this year.

Episcopal Church Launches Nationwide Drive to Help AIDS Victims By Bill Kenkelen

SAN FRANCISCO (RNS)—The Episcopal Church, in a first for a major denomination, is mounting a campaign throughout the United States to fight discrimination against AIDS victims and their families.

“There is a real need to counter the hogwash coming from right-wing Christians,” said Episcopal layman Bill Lorton, one of the leaders of a conference held here this month to launch the drive.

Mr. Lorton said efforts to keep children with AIDS out of schools and attempts to stop the publication of sexually explicit material for AIDS prevention are the result of “hysteria and hatred” emanating from fundamentalist groups.

“These people are not moral, and they are not a majority,” said Mr. Lorton. “But unlike the mainstream churches, they raise millions of dollars to try to influence the public policy.”

In the meeting here, several hundred Episcopal clergy and lay people from 41 states and the District of Columbia put together plans to begin a “network of churches” to help AIDS victims and their families and to advocate against discrimination and for more AIDS research and social services.

“I really think this is an historic event,” said AIDS sufferer John Lorenzini. “It’s the first attempt by a substantial religious organization to do something constructive about AIDS. And we certainly need courageous religious leadership.”

The Episcopal AIDS drive is the result of a resolution passed at the Episcopal

General Convention held last September.

It called for the development of special prayers for people affected by the AIDS crisis and development and funding of programs for AIDS education, prevention and ministry. It also called for the repudiation of statements which condemn or reject AIDS victims, and advocacy for more substantial research funding.

The effort to pass the resolution was led by Bishop William Swing of the Diocese of California, based in San Francisco, and the members of the Parsonage, an Episcopal ministry program in San Francisco for gay and lesbian people.

Marion Cedarblade, an Episcopal laywoman who works at the Parsonage, said she and others told the Episcopal church leaders at the general convention about the reconciliation that has been taking place between the church and AIDS victims and gay and lesbian people in San Francisco. She said they agreed that the work should be expanded nationwide.

Ms. Cedarblade said she stressed the importance of dealing with AIDS outside cities with the largest AIDS case loads. She said many of the victims in cities like San Francisco and New York come from elsewhere and that their families need help.

Some of these families, she said, don’t know how or don’t want to deal with the disease. As a result, she said, “We sometimes have to pass the hat around to get somebody out of the morgue and get them buried.”

No matter where they came from,

Episcopalians at the conference said that churches as a whole in every part of the country have failed to defend or help AIDS victims.

The views of the Rev. Margaret McCarthy of Pittsburgh were typical.

She said individual church members and isolated parishes are doing something, but that “the churches as a whole haven’t done much. If anything, they’ve contributed to the problems. That’s one of the major things our delegation (of five) is going to work on when we get back.”

Mrs. Ginger Paul, wife of an Episcopal church pastor in Shreveport, La., said she and other Episcopalians in Louisiana will work to let AIDS victims and their families know that help is available.

The Rev. James Taylor, an Episcopal campus minister at Indiana University in Bloomington, Ind., said, “We have the great problem of homophobia to deal with in the Midwest. We have a lot of people turning to the fundamentalists for quick answers and an easy indictment of gay people as the cause and source of AIDS. And the other churches have failed to speak out against blaming the victims.”

Taylor said Episcopalians in Indiana will be helping the gay community develop support services for the expected increase in the number of AIDS cases there.

The conference participants were addressed by politicians, social service workers and medical experts, including Dr. Mathilde Krim, co-chair of the American Foundation for AIDS research.

UFMCC FOUNDER RECEIVES 2nd DOCTORATE

The Reverend Elder Dr. Troy D. Perry has been awarded a second honorary doctorate. The Honorary Doctorate of Human Service was conferred by Sierra University, Santa Monica, California. He was recognized for "...his work on actively opposing all forms of human oppression, ageism, sexism, racism and for being an outspoken advocate of gay and lesbian rights..."

Continued from Page 8 Religious Right

precise homosexual conduct most responsible for AIDS transmission."

Perhaps most frightening are the indications that the Religious Right has used its clout with the Reagan Administration to ensure that AIDS would receive low priority when the time came for funding of public health programs.

In February of 1985, former U.S. Public Health Service Chief Dr. Edward Brandt Jr. told a reporter for the San Francisco Chronicle that he had delayed his resignation for 18 months, fearing that AIDS research would be axed by White House budget cutters.

The first AIDS cases were detected just a month after Brandt's swearing-in, and he says he quickly became surrounded by "all these interest groups," including religious fundamentalists who advised him to spend less on AIDS and more on "legitimate" diseases.

The Surgeon General, Dr. C. Everett Koop, told "Christianity Today" magazine that the spread of AIDS could be controlled "if people maintain mutually faithful, monogamous sexual relationships."

Dr. Mathilde Krim, co-founder of the American Foundation for AIDS Research, says anti-gay views have been partially responsible for belated action against AIDS on the part of government officials who believed that "the disease would remain in one segment of the population."

Harvard Law School Professor Alan Dershowitz has called the posture of the Religious Right on AIDS "An almost gleeful nastiness... 'I-told-you-so' gloating."

But Christians involved in the fight against AIDS must echo the words of the assistant to Chicago's Mayor Washington who said, "We're crying out for a Father Damien," the 19th-century Catholic priest who devoted his life to a leper colony.

There was a day when the church served as a refuge for those whose illness caused them to be shunned by society. AIDS may be the real test of whether churches are prepared to meet Jesus' challenge to heal the sick in body and spirit.

Continued from Page 6

Breaking Silence

book on the front page of the Orlando Diocesan newspaper.

The Bishop of Detroit basically said the same thing. He said that he didn't plan to read the book and he didn't know anyone in the diocese who planned to read it.

Faher John Connally of the Archdiocese of Boston pressured the television station to cancel the appearance of Rosemary and me. He also acknowledged that he hadn't read the book and, in fact, hadn't even seen it.

The Vatican ordered a copy of the book and the order was written on official Vatican stationery. Maybe that is an indication that someone there is bothering to read it.

The National Council of Bishops also ordered a copy.

Basically there has not been any official reaction.

On the level of the people of the Church, and I guess I would include in that some of the nuns and priests as well who have responded, then the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

Often they say something like, "I was very worried when I first heard about the book that it was going to be a scandalous attack on the Church. When I read it I realized that it was a sensitive and sincere attempt to simply tell the truth of these women's lives."

A lot of religious communities have said that they see the book as a tool to begin to deal with homophobia and ignorance and that they appreciate that.



**I'm afraid, Sister, that we are going to ask you to
return to the traditional habit.**

Reprinted from the Advocate with permission of the Advocate and Gerard Donelan

Community...The Great Healer By Reverend-Elect Sandra Lynn Robinson

Within the eclectic and diverse world of our society, the potential for the power of healing is tremendous. We are learning that "healing" means infinitely more than being struck on the head by an impassioned evangelist telling us to get up and walk.

To heal means "to make sound or whole." Certainly a focus of an authentic Christian community is the attainment of individual and collective wholeness.

Healing means to return to a sound state. We are called to accept our sexuality. Imagine the healing that would take place all over the world if human beings were happy, healthy beings by accepting their sexuality.

We are called to wholeness and health through our differences. We are called to do these things through and in community. That is what MCCs are all about. They are the place where we can be who we are and where we can be loved and healed.

This is the time for gay men to close ranks around the sufferings of people with AIDS and their families and friends—but not alone.

It is not the time to take a noble stand in a glorious struggle without their sisters. This is not the time to continue in denial of the possibility that our straight sisters and brothers may be, in part, responsible for AIDS. The healing must also come through accountability.

The **only** answer to our mutual healing is community. It is the only way we can really get to know and understand each other, activating compassion.

More than a dozen gay and lesbian Christian groups met in Oslo, Norway, during early May for the fifth annual Forum of European Gay Christians. The Forum heard presentations on themes of interest to gay and lesbian Christians, discussed the AIDS epidemic, adopted a constitution and voted groups into membership. Among the groups accepted into membership was the UFMCC.

Most of the participating groups were formed within Europe's mainline Christian churches and are highly dedicated to working for greater understanding and acceptance of homosexuals within their denominations. Until now, membership in the Forum was restricted to such groups. But the new constitution defines membership criteria to allow for inclusion of the UFMCC as a member. In previous Forum meetings the UFMCC participated as an observer.

The Reverend Elder Jean White represented the UFMCC as an observer at previous Forum meetings. She sees the affiliation as opportunity for much more access within the state churches of Europe.

Compassion can provide us with what Martin Luther King Jr. called a "beloved" community.

Compassion is liberating self and others, doing justice, celebrating joy and binding up the wounds of suffering together.

Now, there are obvious societal reasons why gay men and lesbian women have varying degrees of animosity between the two groups, just as there are obvious reasons why some black people continue to be distrustful of white people.

But we have common ground and we have the potential for a mutually healing community that provides us with blessed opportunities of growth that are impractical or improbable in straight communities.

Women, we must practice compassion as we never have before. Our brothers in

their fear, pain, and grief from AIDS will probably strike out at us on occasion.

There are those who will not understand why we (lesbians) are not contracting the disease in the high numbers that men are. We must learn to deal with this kind of grief and anger through compassion.

Our brothers will already be weakened physically, mentally and emotionally by the ravages of disease and may not have the consciousness or the ability to speak with us at crucial moments.

A beloved community, a nurturing community, may be the only solace or support for those battered lay or clergy who are called to this challenge.

In times to come, we will be called on to be Christlike in emotionally devastating situations.

We will be called into hospital rooms of people who will not respect us because of our sexuality, race, gender, or collar.

We will be called to do a ministry of healing through the evils of discrimination from the greater community and within our own community.

We must immediately recognize the hidden blessing of AIDS; that through awful disease we may find each other in powerful ways.

We have no choice now but to turn to each other.

In the love connections we make we will overcome not only the disease, but the dis-eases that we have been taught by our parent society.

God has given us this awesome paradox, I believe, so that the story can be told to the nations...**community!**



UFMCC JOINS EUROPEAN GAY CHRISTIAN FORUM

White, who serves as Pastor of Metropolitan Community Church in London and directs the UFMCC program of World Church Extension, said, "This action opens the possibility of inquiries about MCC from many gay and lesbian Christians in Europe."

UFMCC Delegates to the Oslo meeting included the Reverend Bob Arthur, European North Sea District Coordinator, and Laurens Verges, a lay member of Aben Kirkegruppe (Metropolitan Com-

munity Church) in Copenhagen, Denmark. Ms. Verges was elected co-president of a five-member Secretariat, the Forum's top governing committee.

This year the Secretariat plans to petition the World Council of Churches urging its member communions toward a more positive view of homosexuals with those denominations. The group will also protest the Vatican's demand for dismissal of theologian Charles Curran from Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Curran dissents with official church teaching in many areas of sexual ethics, including his pro-gay stance on homosexuality.

Norway, the world's only country with a national law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of homosexual orientation, proved to be an hospitable site for the conference. Delegates were personally welcomed by the Mayor of Oslo during a luncheon reception at City Hall. Local officials also provided delegates with a tour of the city and hosted dinner at a scenic resort overlooking Oslo.

Next year's Forum will be held in Frankfurt, West Germany.

VARIED VIEWS FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

Archbishop bans talk by former Priest, Mass for Homosexuals

ST. LOUIS (RNS)--Archbishop John L. May has barred a married former priest from lecturing on religious education to Catholic teachers here, and has forbidden archdiocesan priests to celebrate Mass at a conference on ministry to homosexuals.

The former priest, Thomas H. Groome, is an associate professor of theology at Boston College, which is run by Jesuit priests. He was married last June, but has been denied a dispensation from his vow of celibacy, which means the church officially considers him to be living in sin.

Archbishop May said he was required by canon law to bar suspended priests from leadership roles. But Robert Schutzius, a former priest who is an administrator at the Southern Illinois University business school, noted that Mr. Groome had conducted seminars under official Catholic sponsorship in at least 10 dioceses and three Catholic seminaries since his marriage. He said Archbishop May had

violated the "rights of Catholics in the church" by barring Mr. Groome from speaking at the education seminar.

Mr. Groome spoke at a Catholic teachers' day in the Diocese of Sacramento, Calif., on March 8, the same day he had been scheduled to speak here. The date of the St. Louis workshop was changed to March 22, and new speakers were chosen, but no explanation was given to religion teachers in the archdiocese. The new speakers were Carl Pfeifer and Janann Manternack, religious educators from Alexandria, Va.

Archbishop May said he had told diocesan priests not to celebrate Mass at the conference on ministry to homosexuals because the organization sponsoring it, New Ways Ministry, promotes homosexual activity.

But Regina Miller, the conference coordinator, said that "homosexual activity is not the focus of our ministry."

Rather, she said, the organization is seeking to carry out a directive in a 1976 pastoral letter to the U.S. bishops which urged "a special degree of pastoral understanding and care" for homosexuals.

The conference opened April 25 with a keynote address by Daniel Maguire, professor of moral theology at Marquette University. Dr. Maguire has stirred controversy for his assertion that homosexual activity may be morally acceptable under certain circumstances.

Ms. Miller said the conference participants represented at least 20 religious orders, included superiors and vocation directors.

"Our focus is pastoral ministry," she said. "We present the church's teaching on homosexual activity, and we present the opinions of reputable theologians, some of whom dissent."

Church Leaders in Southern Africa Ask for Special PRAYER for JUSTICE

Four leaders of church councils in Southern Africa have called upon the churches in the United States to join them in prayers for an end to apartheid and peace with justice in their nations.

Beyers Naude, General Secretary of the South Africa Council of Churches, has announced that June 16th has been set aside as a special day of prayer. He asked that churches in the United States join in the prayer.

Naude made the request at the May meeting of the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches of Christ in

the USA which convened in New Orleans.

"We know that we are on the way to freedom," said Naude. "We do not know when it will come, we do not know how it will come, but deep down in the hearts of millions of people of South Africa the song is already being heard, 'We Are on the March to Freedom.'"

Naude appeared at the meeting with The Rev. Jose Chipenda, General Secretary of the Council of Evangelical Churches of Angola, The Rev. Filipe Seque Banze, General Secretary of the Christian Council of Mozambique, and

The Rev. Abisai Shejavali, General Secretary of the Council of Churches of Mamibia. The four men issued a joint statement calling on American churches to "Act for peace with justice in southern Africa."

The statement said, in part: "Once again, we call upon the American churches to work actively against the exploitation of apartheid; to work actively against policies that give lip service to our political and social liberation while seeking to deny us economic justice."

FIDEL CASTRO SHOWS NEW OPENNESS TOWARD RELIGION

A new era of church-state cooperation is being observed in Cuba and some are attributing that, in part, to a visit to that nation by the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

A National Council of Churches delegation which visited Cuba April 27 to May 3 of this year has reported that the most visible evidence of a "new day" in the relationship of Cuban churches to their government is the publication of a book entitled "Fidel Y La Religion" (Fidel and Religion). The book is a series of interviews

with Fidel Castro by a Brazilian Dominican priest, Frei Betto. It has been a best selling book in Cuba.

In the interviews, Castro speaks of his own religious upbringing and discusses the potential for the participation of the church in the creation of a new society.

The report of the NCC delegation, which was filed after the visit to Cuba, indicated that Castro had been impressed by the message that Rev. Jesse Jackson had brought to the country:

"Many agreed that the culminating factor in the changed attitude was the visit of Rev. Jesse Jackson to Cuba in October 1984. For the first time Fidel Castro entered a Protestant church (the principal Methodist church in Havana). He was visibly moved by the preaching of Jesse Jackson, and participated with the congregation in singing 'We Shall Overcome.' As a result of the changed attitude there is a new expectation of society toward the churches."

VARIED VIEWS FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

GLOBAL MINISTRIES RESOLVE A COMPASSIONATE RESPONSE TO AIDS

NEW YORK (UNMS)--Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a medical condition requiring "a compassionate response by the church," according to a resolution passed by the United Methodist mission agency here April 11.

The nine-page statement approved by the Board of Global Ministries specifically rejected the belief that AIDS is a punishment from God. It called for a variety of actions by the churches to protect the civil rights of persons with the disease and to find a cure for it.

Calling AIDS a "preventable" disease, the statement called on the President and Congress "to see that adequate funds are made available to develop a vaccine against AIDS and to carry out a program of rational health education to stop its spread."

The National Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, as of June 2, 1986, reported 21,302 Americans have been diagnosed as having AIDS since 1981 and 11,645 have died. The statement did not specify

populations most commonly afflicted with the ailment, but referred to "communities of persons who are disproportionately affected by AIDS."

The statement was prepared by the board's Health and Welfare Ministries Department.

Civil rights violations experienced by AIDS victims include "the loss of jobs, denial of health insurance and life insurance, refusal of medical care and eviction," according to the statement.

Other "painful realities" include cultivation of an atmosphere of fear by public officials and others in authority who "advocate inappropriate methods [not supported by medical evidence] to contain the spread of AIDS, such as quarantine and screening of the general public."

The "politics of AIDS" has the potential to cause legislators and politicians to fear constituency reprisals should they initiate or support legislation to make funding available for prevention and cure, it was noted.

The board also noted the use of the

AIDS crisis by some religious persons as an opportunity to "preach the belief that God inflicts illness as a sign of divine judgment and punishment."

In contrast, the statement said the "unconditional love of God exemplified in Jesus' earthly life" challenges the church to be a healing community, reaching out through prayers and other means to those affected by the disease.

The board opposed "homophobia and other prejudices that use the AIDS epidemic to discriminate against persons," and urged congregations and church-related health institutions to work to "ensure the protection of the rights of persons with AIDS, their friends and families."

The statement was the second by a United Methodist program board. On Feb. 28 the Board of Discipleship in Nashville approved a resolution confessing the church has not always responded "lovingly" to this epidemic and applauding "all local churches who have undertaken ministries of compassion and hope."

Conservative Methodists Uniting Against Gay Minister

DENVER (UMNS)--Fifty-three United Methodist ministers from western Michigan have written to Denver area Bishop Roy I. Sano an open letter critical of procedures that have allowed a gay pastor here to remain under appointment.

An Investigation Committee of the Rocky Mountain Annual (regional) Conference April 28 voted 4-3 against recommending the Rev. Julian Rush be put on trial for violating church law.

Bishop Sano told United Methodist News Service the letter from the Michigan pastors assumes nothing further is being done and that all procedures have been terminated.

"We are preparing for a review by the Judicial Council [the church's nine-member 'supreme court'] to see if the Committee on Investigation was duly constituted."

Members of the church's top legislative body in 1984 barred "self-avowed practicing" homosexuals from ordination or appointment.

In a subsequent ruling the Judicial Council said ministers in good standing in an annual conference could not be removed without due process, and left the definition of "self-avowed practicing

homosexual" up to each annual conference.

The Rocky Mountain Conference said the term applied to those who "engage in an openly acknowledge genital sexual behavior with a person or persons of the same sex."

In a session with the Rocky Mountain Board of Ordained Ministry, Mr. Rush refused to answer questions about his personal life related to that definition.

The board then ruled that, without his acknowledgement as a practicing homosexual, he could not be removed from the ministry. He serves as a half-time pastor of St. Paul's United Methodist Church here. He went public with his homosexuality in 1981 while serving First United Methodist Church in Boulder.

In their letter, the Michigan pastors note that the "careful" language of the 1984 General Conference was intended to prevent "witch hunts." However, they add, "it was certainly not intended to so restrict us that only those who are 'caught in the act' can be charged and tried! The interpretation of your Conference's Committee on Investigation has limited its application to those who would in effect publicly ask to be dismissed!"

The ministers note that Mr. Rush's public news media admissions of being gay and having a male lover should be grounds for his dismissal.

"The fact that the Committee on Investigation allowed him to hide behind the narrowly-defined and even more restrictively-applied definition of 'self-avowed' homosexual is a travesty of justice," the ministers charge. "It has made a mockery of the *Discipline*, and of the will of the people called United Methodist. It has broken our bonds of covenant trust, and put a crippling strain on our connection."

The ministers also contend in their letter that the Rocky Mountain Conference action has set a "tragic precedent" for individual annual conferences "to disregard and violate the will of the general church as expressed in the *Discipline*."

The ministers call on Bishop Sano to denounce action of the Committee on Investigation and to "quickly take steps to lead your area back into conformity with the clear intent of the *Discipline* of the United Methodist Church."

The annual session of the Rocky Mountain Annual Conference was held June 9-12 at Fort Collins, Colo. The next meeting of the Judicial Council is scheduled for October 22-28 in Raleigh, N.C.

SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS SODOMY LAWS

By Stan Haste
Correspondent
Religious News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—By the narrowest of margins, the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld laws in 24 states and the District of Columbia imposing criminal penalties on homosexuals convicted of engaging in acts of sodomy.

In a 5-4 opinion written by Justice Byron R. White and released June 30, the high court threw out the claim of Michael Hardwick—an acknowledged practicing homosexual—that Georgia's sodomy law violated his right to privacy. Earlier decisions of the court that invoked privacy rights in such issues as contraception and abortion do not extend to sodomy, Mr. White ruled for the majority.

Referring to the earlier decisions, Mr. White wrote that "none of the rights announced in those cases bears any resemblance to the claimed constitutional right of homosexuals to engage in acts of sodomy."

Mr. White traced sodomy laws to early American history, noting that sodomy was considered a crime in all 13 original colonies. Further, he wrote, until 1961 all 50 states outlawed such acts.

"Against this background, to claim that a right to engage in such conduct is 'deeply rooted in this nation's history and tradition' or 'implicit in the concept of ordered liberty' is, at best, facetious," Mr. White concluded.

Nor are laws forbidding homosexual sodomy invalidated by the argument that such acts occur in the privacy of one's home, Mr. White held.

"Plainly enough, otherwise illegal conduct is not always immunized whenever it occurs in the home," he wrote, adding, "it would be difficult...to limit the claimed right to homosexual conduct while leaving exposed to prosecution adultery, incest, and other sexual crimes even though they are committed in the home. We are unwilling to start down that road."

In a dissenting opinion nearly twice the length of the majority opinion, Justice Harry A. Blackmun said the Hardwick case "is about 'the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized men,' namely, 'the right to be let alone.'"

A prime weakness of the majority ruling, Mr. Blackmun argued, was "the court's almost obsessive focus on homosexual activity," even though the challenged Georgia law applies equally to heterosexuals—including married couples.

Mr. Blackmun disagreed further with the majority's finding that such acts are not protected when done inside one's own home.

"Indeed, the right of an individual to conduct intimate relationships in the intimacy of his or her own home seems to me to be the heart of the Constitution's protection of privacy," he argued.

The case came to the high court from Atlanta, Ga., where Mr. Hardwick was arrested in 1982 and charged with committing sodomy with another man in his Atlanta house. Although the district attorney decided not to prosecute, Mr. Hardwick challenged the law anyway.

The practical effect of the high court ruling is expected to be minimal because most states that still have sodomy laws make no attempt to enforce them. In Georgia, for example, no sodomy prosecutions have been undertaken for several decades.

Individual's Rights

"I can only hope that the Court soon will reconsider its analysis and conclude that depriving individuals of the right to choose for themselves how to conduct their intimate relationships poses a far greater threat to the values most deeply rooted in our nation's history than tolerance of non-conformity could ever do. Because I think the Court today betrays these values, I dissent."

from the dissenting opinion
Associate Justice Harry H. Blackmun

UFMCC Board of Elders Respond

The Board of Elders of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches is shocked and dismayed at the ruling of the United States Supreme Court that the Constitution does not protect the privacy and rights of consenting adults. When the law of the land makes it illegal for two people to love each other and freely express that love in the privacy of their own homes—such a law is unjust and immoral.

It is a violation of the spirit of the framers of the Constitution whose dream it was to have a government that afforded citizens maximum protection from undue government interference in the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness.

It is significant that it was such a sharply divided decision. The lack of agreement within the court reflects the conflict surrounding this issue in America. We are encouraged by the justices who opposed this decision, and regret the action of the narrow majority.

It also gives a signal to gay & lesbian citizens, and all who do not conform to court "approved" sexual practices that they cannot expect to receive government protection for their rights. It opens the door to further repression and back lash against the gay and lesbian community.

We will ask our membership to pursue remedy through the legislative process to insure that the rights of lesbian and gay people are protected through the enactment of civil rights legislation. We will also pursue the election of a president who will support and sign such legislation.

In Loving Memory

You can provide a living memorial for your friend or loved one who has died and at the same time participate in the UFMCC AIDS Ministry.

Simply send the name of your friend or loved one and a contribution to the "UFMCC AIDS Ministry."

UFMCC AIDS Ministry
Suite 304
5300 Santa Monica Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90029

Memorial Contribution UFMCC AIDS MINISTRY

Name of Deceased Person:

Name of Person or Persons
Making Contribution

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY

NOTE: This person's name will be listed in the Memorial section of the next issue of JOURNEY MAGAZINE.

☐ **Yes;** you may list my name in JOURNEY MAGAZINE as a contributor.

☐ **NO;** please do not list my name in JOURNEY MAGAZINE as a contributor.

MAIL TO:
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SUITE 304
5300 SANTA MONICA BLVD.
LOS ANGELES, CA 90029

Ministry contribution
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Los Angeles, CA 90029

For your convenience an AIDS Ministry contribution card and envelope are included in this issue of Journey magazine.

Your memorial contribution will be acknowledged in the next issue of Journey magazine and your contribution will support the UFMCC AIDS Ministry.

"Look at the Metropolitan Community Church today—the Gay Church—almost accepted into the World Council...National Council of Churches. Almost. The vote was against them. But they will try again and again until they get in. And the tragedy is that they would get one vote. Because they are spoken of here in Jude as being brute beasts—that is going to the baser lust of the flesh to live immorally and so Jude describes this as apostasy. Thank God this vile and satanic system will one day be utterly annihilated and there will be a celebration in heaven."

From a Sermon on the TV Program "old Time Gospel Hour" by Rev. Jerry Falwell, President, Moral Majority.

**No, Jerry, that's not what
Metropolitan Community Church is like because:**



We are a caring, loving group of people.

We have created a 60-minute television documentary to confront those kind of lies, and others made by people like you who preach that we, as Lesbians and Gay males are brute beasts, not people.

Our documentary portrays the lives of women and men in the Gay community praying for and struggling to secure freedom and liberation for all people...teachers...Cuban Refugees...Third World People...persons with AIDS...Gay parents...the churched and unchurched...youth and seniors...sisters and brothers around the world who seek peace and prosperity. We have shared on tape the truth that spirituality and sexuality are compatible.

Mr. Falwell, I am asking my friends for help to show it like it is. I am asking them to please send their tax-deductible donations to me to get this message on the air. And it will be on the air because my friends care.

GOD, GAYS & THE GOSPEL: This is OUR story.

A television presentation of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

YES! I would like to answer Jerry!

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- ☐ A CONTRIBUTOR: Minimum donation of \$500.00 per year
- ☐ A PARTNER: Minimum donation of \$1,000.00 per year.
- ☐ I cannot join at this time, but keep me on your mailing list.
- ☐ Enclosed is my donation to help defray costs.

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